

Masters' Thesis Towards The Degree of MA (Political Studies)
The University of Cape Town

THE PROBLEM OF HEGEMONY IN GRAMSCI: A CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF AN-
TONIO GRAMSCI'S CONTRIBUTION TO A MARXIST THEORY OF THE STATE
AND POLITICS

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October 1992

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with a study of the concept of politics in Marxist theory, and more particularly with Antonio Gramsci's contribution towards a revaluation of historical materialism.

In Chapter 1 I will introduce two major 'Western' conceptions of the state and politics, to be termed the unitarian and pluralist conceptions of politics respectively. In section 1.1 I will provide an outline of the main characteristics of the Ancient Greek polis or city-state to serve as the basis for section 1.2 in which I will provide a comparative overview of the concepts of the state and politics in Aristotle and Plato. My discussion in section 1.2 of Plato's political unitarianism will serve as a starting point for my analysis of Marx's unitary concepts of the state and politics in section 1.4 and Chapter 2. Section 1.4 will, in addition, address the question of the influence on Marx of Hegel's and Feuerbach's political thought. In section 1.3 I will describe the thought of Bernard Crick who takes Aristotle's early political pluralism as the starting point for his liberal pluralist understanding of the state and politics. This will in turn serve as the contrasting background for my analysis of Marx's unitary concepts of the state and politics as well as providing a link to Gramsci's 'Marxist pluralism'.

As background to the discussion of Gramsci's theory of politics in Chapters 3 and 4 I will provide an analysis of Marx's concepts of the state and politics in Chapter 2, which will be divided into three sections. In section 2.1 I will give an account of some of Marx's major early works highlighting their significance for Marx's transition to his materialist conception of history, which will be the subject of section 2.2.1. Against the background of my discussion in section 2.2.1 of some of the most important concepts of historical materialism I will, in section

2.2.2, outline the problem of 'economism' in the orthodox Marxism of the Second and Third Internationals.

My analysis of Gramsci's theory of politics will commence in Chapter 3 which will focus on Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony'. In section 3.1 I will describe the first meaning of hegemony in Gramsci which I will then relate to his concepts of the 'political party', the 'intellectuals' and 'ideology' (3.1.1). In section 3.2 I will describe the second meaning of hegemony in Gramsci with particular reference to his concepts of 'passive revolution' (3.2.1), the 'integral state' (3.2.2), the 'war of position' and 'war of manoeuvre' (3.2.3), and 'civil society' (3.2.4).

Chapter 4 will focus on the question of Gramsci's critical recasting of historical materialism against the background of his critique of economism. Section 4.1. will be divided into five parts. Section 4.1.1 is devoted to an analysis of Gramsci's concept of philosophy. Sections 4.1.2 and 4.1.3 will deal with the distinction Gramsci drew between 'conjunctural' and 'organic' elements which operate in the history of a society. In section 4.1.4 I will analyse Gramsci's concept of the 'historical bloc' and in section 4.1.5 I will provide an overview of three important interpretations of the latter concept. Section 4.2, which deals with Gramsci's dualistic concept of politics, will be divided into two parts. In section 4.2.1 the influence on Gramsci of Machiavelli's political thought will be outlined with a view to section 4.2.2 in which Gramsci's 'pluralist' concept of politics will be analysed.

In my concluding chapter I will outline the importance of Gramsci's pluralist concept of politics for the concept of democracy in the tradition of Marxist political theory.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with a study of the concept of politics in Marxist theory, and more particularly with the contributions of Antonio Gramsci to remedy the relative neglect and defects of a properly theorised concept of politics in the Marxist tradition.

For the greater part of the Twentieth Century the dominant themes in political theory have been framed by the mutually antagonistic liberal and Marxist paradigms. The 'bipolarity' of global political activity and conflict has, in one way or another, informed and structured this polarised relationship. From the construction of the liberal welfare state in the aftermath of the October Revolution and Great Depression, to the post-war formation of opposing politico-ideological 'blocs' -- punctuated by the historically complex and energetic rise and collapse of fascism -- the very terms of the theoretical understanding of politics itself was determined by opposing paradigms.

Soviet domination of Marxist political theory, especially until the late 1950s, stemmed from the uniquely prominent status which the success of the Russian Revolution accorded Marxism-Leninism and, subsequently, Stalinism. The prominence of Stalinism had important implications for the development of Marxist political theory, especially during the Inter-War period. On a general level it contributed towards the ideological dogmatism of orthodox Marxism and the suppression of important work in the field of Marxist political theory. For our purposes it should be noted that attempts to suppress Gramsci's political ideas was not limited to the actions of the Italian fascist state but also occurred within factions of the Italian Communist Party after the Second World War.

It would nonetheless be quite erroneous to suggest that the relative neglect of political theory in the Marxist tradition can

wholly be equated with the history of authoritarian constraints in the political and intellectual spheres of Soviet influence. For the source of much of the difficulty and controversy surrounding Marxist political theory is also related to the unsystematic and implicit nature of Marx's political writing. Herein lies Gramsci's great contribution to Marxism and the central theme of this study: the formulation of a Marxist theory of political action which until comparatively recently remained unrecognised, even within the world of Marxism.

Gramsci, like Marx and Lenin before him, argued that social classes have their origins in the material relations of production and that class struggle has a determining role in the process of social change. For Marx, Engels and Lenin the state was a classbound institution, and the struggle for state power between antagonistic classes constituted the substance of politics. Consequently if, as Engels argued, the state would wither away following a communist revolution, politics too would disappear. Gramsci radically altered this restricted notion of politics in at least two important respects. Firstly, he argued that the struggle for state power was only one aspect of the workers' struggle against the capitalist state. The other was the struggle for hegemony, i.e. the struggle to replace the bourgeoisie's intellectual and moral dominance in all aspects of state and civil life. Gramsci therefore broadened the classical Marxist concept of politics to include also the struggle between conflicting concepts of social, ideological and political reality. Secondly, in a move directly related to his notion of hegemony and his redefined concept of civil society, Gramsci rejected the narrow classbound concept of the state found for example in Lenin. Instead, Gramsci argued that the supremacy of a social group involves integrating its own interests and aspirations with those of a broad spectrum of social forces, not all of whom have a class identity. Gramsci referred to such non-class groups as popular-democratic movements, and consistently argued that the supremacy of a particular social group could not be sus-

tained without such a broad based alliance. Furthermore, Gramsci argued that such alliances could only be constructed and maintained on the basis of consent which would have to be continually renewed and renegotiated even after a transition to a socialist order. Politics, for Gramsci, was thus not conceived merely as a strategy for a socialist revolution; it was the basis and necessary condition of socialism itself. Politics permeated every dimension of life and every aspect of human existence. It was, in short, the 'means by which the single consciousness is brought into contact with the social and natural world in all its forms' (Hoare and Nowell Smith, 1986: xxiii). Thus although Gramsci gave due weight to role which material conditions have in determining social, political and intellectual life, he conceived politics as the positive expression of developing individual energies, the human faculty for creative and critical thought, and the human capacity for collective action towards changing given socio-economic conditions:

'Is it better to "think", without having a critical awareness, in a disjointed and episodic way? In other words, is it better to take part in a conception of the world mechanically imposed by the external environment, i.e. by one of the many social groups in which everyone is automatically involved from the moment of his entry into the conscious world?... Or, on the other hand, is it better to work out consciously and critically one's own conception of the world and thus, in connection with the labours of one's own brain, choose one's sphere of activity, take an active part in the creation of the history of the world, be one's own guide, refusing to accept passively and supinely from outside the moulding of one's personality?' (Gramsci, 1986: 323-324).

Passages such as these reflect the importance Gramsci attached to critical thought and strength of will, qualities which Gramsci not only brought to his philosophy and practice of Marxism, but which characterised his often difficult personal life.

Antonio Gramsci was born in Ales on the island of Sardinia on 22 January 1891. Sardinia had a long history of imperial occupation. The peasant culture of the island benefited very little from successive occupations which left behind an exhausted natural environment and an impoverished populace. As Davidson tells us, the pattern of

'exploitation was set by the Carthagians and Romans who established huge grain farms on the plains of the west and south and worked them on an exploitation basis with indigenous and imported slave-labour. Both the land and the slaves were drained of life in a savage and senseless exploitation' (Davidson, 1977: 2).

By the time the island was united with Italy in 1861 Sardinia's traditional role as a subordinate province was well established. The socio-economic and political consequences of this were greatly to influence Gramsci's intellectual development.

Gramsci had a lonely childhood. At the age of four his spine was damaged in a fall. As a consequence of that fall his growth slowed and he began to develop a hunch-back (Hoare and Nowell Smith, 1986: xviii-xix). After his father's arrest and imprisonment in 1898, Gramsci's family lost the privileges it had derived from its petty-bourgeois status and the young Gramsci was confronted with the resentment and ignorance of the local peasantry:

'He met extreme cruelty and persecution born both of the social culture itself and realities such as class and the concomitant class hatreds, and of the natural cruelty of children towards the abnormal. As a result he had become by 1900 a desperately lonely child, whose withdrawal from the normal life of his peers resulted in a sensitivity and capacity for fantasy which made him very socially aware of cruelty and injustice' (Davidson, 1977: 27).

It is perhaps not surprising that, isolated from his peers and taunted by the weak minded Gramsci, a gifted child, filled his days with passionate reading and deep introspection. He never resigned himself to a bad fate, always dominating 'his own unhap-

piness with an iron will for study' (Saporito in Davidson,1977: 34) and he began a long personal struggle which would lead him to considerable achievement, and tragedy.

Gramsci's political awakening began by way of life as a student at Turin University which he attended on a scholarship he won from Sardinia (Hoare and Nowell Smith,1986: xx). It was here that Gramsci gained the interest, so evident in his prison notes, in the thought of Machiavelli, Hegel and Croce, as well as Antonio Labriola who was 'the only Italian theoretical Marxist of any consequence before the first world war' (Hoare and Nowell Smith,1986: xxi). Gramsci only reluctantly gave up time from his studies, and although he became a member of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) in 1913, his involvement in active politics remained for some time quite limited and tentative (Davidson,1977: 63). Gramsci's first substantive political initiative was a blunder: coming out in support of an unpopular policy decision, involving Italy's entry into World War I, by the then newly appointed secretary of the PSI Benito Mussolini (Hoare and Nowell Smith,1986: xxx). After the 'incident' Gramsci was ostracized 'by the bulk of the Turinese working-class leaders, to whom he referred bitterly and contemptuously as "peasants"' (Davidson,1977: 69). Under great personal pressure and stung by his tentative foray into the unstructured, and unsubtle life of politics, Gramsci withdrew into his studies. It was during this period that he devoted much attention to Marx's classical texts.

Gramsci soon gained recognition amongst fellow students as an opponent of the nationalistic excesses sweeping through Europe. Furthermore, he gradually won back his position in the PSI, and his intellectual talent gained practical expression:

'When a worker said things that were wrong... Gramsci knew how to reprove him both dryly and severely if it was needed; but always in a fashion which convinced him that he had made a mistake, without offending him, much less humiliating him' (Parodi in Davidson,1977: 73).

Gramsci's experience of the intellectual needs of the workers provided him with a cultural perspective which influenced the development of his highly original mature conceptions of the intellectuals, ideology, and politics. In 1916 he wrote:

'The first step in emancipating oneself from political and social slavery is that of freeing the mind... The problem of education is the most important class problem' (Gramsci in Davidson, 1977: 77).

The period of 'praxis' had arrived.

In view of the 'orthodox' Marxist tendency to emphasise Gramsci's indebtedness to Lenin, it is worth recalling that Gramsci knew nothing of Lenin until 1917 (Davidson, 1977: 81, 162-167; Hoare and Nowell Smith, 1986: xxx, xxxi; McLellan, 1986: 178). This would, of course, change after news of the Russian Revolution began to reach Southern Europe. And Gramsci read what little became available of Lenin's writing in Italy following the revolution. Nonetheless, it was the Italian milieu which constituted the formative influence on Gramsci's unique world view (Hoare and Nowell Smith, 1986: lviii-lx). And even in his early writing Gramsci eschewed any form of dogmatism, exclaiming in 1918 that Marx was

'not a Messiah who left a string of parables laden with categorical imperatives and absolutely incontrovertible norms outside the categories of time and space' (Gramsci in Davidson, 1977: 90; see Gramsci, 1988: 34-37).

During the years 1919-1920 Gramsci's increasing activity within the Turin workers' movement and his collaboration with Angelo Tasca and Palmiro Togliatti, amongst others, inspired his now famous Ordine Nuovo articles and contributed heavily towards his involvement in the formation of the factory council movement (Davidson, 1977: 122-127; Hoare, 1978: xvi, Hoare and Nowell Smith, 1986: xxxvii). Gramsci conceived the factory councils, which were organised around the principle of direct participatory workers' democracy, as

'the institutions whereby the dictatorship of the proletariat would be exercised, institutions which stood towards the "voluntary", "private" associations such as the party and the trade union in a relation of "State" to "government"' (Hoare and Nowell Smith, 1986: xxxix).

However, they soon conflicted with the perceived interests of the traditional working-class organisations and especially with the leaders and bureaucrats of the more broadly based, and generally more 'conservative' socialist trade union federation (C.G.L.). The union leaders and functionaries were essentially reformists who feared for their positions of power and who had long enjoyed the backing of important leaders within the PSI. Union hostility and the lack of PSI support together with the council movement's failure to recognise the importance of a revolutionary party to guide the movement resulted in the movement's defeat in a series of confrontations with the employers' federation in 1920. Amadeo Bordiga, the first leader of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), characterised the ideas of the Ordine Nuovo as a form of 'reformism' or 'syndicalism' defined

'by the erroneous view that the proletariat can emancipate itself by winning ground in economic relations, while capitalism still holds political power through its control of the state' (Bordiga in Hoare and Nowell Smith, 1986: xxxix).

Faced with the crushing defeat of the council movement, Gramsci condemned the PSI and the unions for their prevarication and partial complicity. Nevertheless, Gramsci recognised his own underestimation of the need for a cohesive, highly organised revolutionary party to spearhead the socialist movement (Hoare, 1978: xvii). By 1924 this realisation had reached a very sophisticated level of analysis in Gramsci's writing (Gramsci, 1978: 191-203). Gramsci's intellectual sophistication and mushrooming practical wisdom aside, Bordiga managed to exploit the drawbacks of the Ordine Nuovo group by emphasising his grasp of a revolutionary party's vital role (Hoare and Nowell Smith, 1986: xxix, xxxiv). And the consolidation of the national faction of communists

within the PSI led to the formation of the Italian Communist Party in January 1921 under Bordiga's leadership (Hoare,1978: x-xii; Hoare and Nowell Smith,1986: xxxiii-xxxiv). Prior to the formation of the PCI Gramsci had begun to devote considerable energies to analysing the structural conditions which had led to the PSI's impotence. An early insight involved equating the rot within the PSI with the petty-bourgeois mentality which permeated Italian society:

'After having corrupted and ruined the institution of parliament, the petty-bourgeoisie corrupts and ruins the other institutions as well, the fundamental pillars of the state: the army, the police and the magistracy' (Gramsci in Davidson,1977: 161).

This view constituted the basis for Gramsci's incisive analysis of fascism. The failure of the PCI to derive benefit from this analysis was perhaps largely due to Bordiga who displayed a 'sublime lack of interest in the question at all' (Hoare,1978: xxi). Nonetheless, Gramsci was now, however tentatively and unconsciously, moving onto the terrain of his radical revaluation of orthodox Marxism with the first suggestion of his more mature notion of class hegemony emerging in his thought.

In May 1922 Gramsci went to Moscow as the PCI representative to the Comintern. He returned, after a brief stay in Vienna, in May 1924 at which time he was elected to the leadership of the PCI (Hoare,1978: xiv). However, Mussolini's total dictatorship had begun and Gramsci's political life ended with his arrest in 1926.

In prison, struggling to adjust to the difficult conditions, Gramsci began to write his now famous notebooks. Davidson writes of Gramsci's prison years:

'When first in prison Gramsci felt the deprivation of his liberty so strongly that he even wondered whether he should sink into oblivion -- "like a stone into the sea" -- and cut off all contact with the outside world... this took an ever heavier toll on his body, initiating a process of

disintegration... His teeth fell out, he suffered from terrible skin complaints as the result of a blood complaint, and the result was frequent pain and ensuing lethargy... In 1930 a contributory factor was the hostility and misunderstanding of many of his political comrades in prison with him' (Davidson,1977: 242, 243, 248).

By 1931 Gramsci's health began to decline rapidly. Nonetheless between 1934 and 1935 he produced some of his most important work. Gramsci died in 1937.

There are a number of problems associated with reading Gramsci. Firstly, most of Gramsci's writing is fragmentary as well as open-ended. An important reason for the somewhat tentative nature of Gramsci's pre-prison writing was his deep involvement in the political life of Italy. This was particularly true of Gramsci's years of activity in the Turin worker's movement. However, more importantly Gramsci's prison writings, which have been collected (and re-organised) in English translation under the title Selected Prison Notebooks (Gramsci,1986), to which I will refer as the SPN, were never revised or systematised by Gramsci. It is therefore difficult to develop a balanced view of his highly complex ideas. This is especially true if one is obliged to read Gramsci in English since to date no definitive edition of his complete set of writings has been published in English translation. This has contributed towards the often superficial analyses of his thought especially, but by no means only, in the Anglo-Saxon world (e.g. McLennan,1987).

A further difficulty with studying Gramsci is the innovative manner in which he used key concepts. On the one hand, Gramsci utilised many concepts which are familiar to students of Hegel and Marx whilst imparting them with a new meaning, often without clearly indicating this altered usage. On the other hand, Gramsci sometimes used the same concept in different ways, a problem which in most cases can only be resolved by close examination of

his texts. In the case of Gramsci's prison notes this latter problem is further complicated by his frequent use of a code to evade the prison censors. This has led some commentators to impart incorrect or inaccurate meanings to some of Gramsci's most crucial concepts (Bobbio,1988). McLellan makes one such error when he claims that 'Gramsci used civil society to refer to the superstructure' (McLellan,1986: 188). As defined by Gramsci, civil society was one element in his complex and dialectical conception of the superstructural sphere.

Yet another difficult aspect of Gramsci's writing is its specific historical context. Gramsci frequently utilised historical and cultural references which are quite specific to Italy and are therefore not always easily accessible to students of Marx. This is especially true of Gramsci's theory of politics which to a large extent was based on novel historical phenomena such as the Italian struggle for unity during the 19th Century.

There are at least three major historical dimensions which must be taken into consideration for a proper reading of Gramsci's more mature political writing. The first of these involves the impact which the initial success of the October Revolution and the subsequent problems arising from the building of real existing socialism had on the development of Gramsci's theory of politics. Gramsci analysed the Russian Revolution from an historical point of view (e.g. Gramsci,1986: 229-238). According to that view the cataclysmic revolutionary break in Russia was as much a product of particular historically determined conditions as it was of the political intervention of the Bolsheviks. Gramsci argued that the success of the Russian Revolution, and analogously the validity of Lenin's theory of political initiative or intervention, could therefore not be viewed in the abstract as a model or blue-print for reproduction by socialist movements elsewhere (e.g. Gramsci,1986: 238). The reason for the success of the Bolshevik revolution and Lenin's strategy was that Czarist Russia lacked the sophisticated and complex economic,

social, and political infrastructure of advanced bourgeois societies in the West, and was therefore less able to resist political intervention by revolutionary forces. Gramsci argued that, on the contrary, capitalist relations of domination in advanced Western societies enabled their bourgeoisies to make considerable material concessions to a broad spectrum of social groups in response to capitalism's long-term socio-economic crisis. This capacity for concrete reform aimed at the construction or reconstitution of the bourgeois's consensual political base posed serious difficulties for the working-class movement. Gramsci described this 'type' of state intervention aimed at the reform or re-organisation of capitalism as 'passive revolution' (Gramsci, 1986: 106-114). Gramsci argued, however, that the process of capitalism's re-organisation throws up a series of problems and contradictions which can, in the long term, only be resolved by the complete economic, social and political transformation of society. Thus whilst Gramsci argued that the bourgeoisie had, historically, proven itself capable of resisting the complete revolutionary transformation of society (a phenomenon to which Gramsci devoted a great deal of investigation), he nonetheless held the view that capitalism's long-term crisis created the basis for incremental revolutionary intervention. Gramsci emphasised, however, that a complete transformation of capitalist society is not inevitable since the structural contradictions which emerge during the re-organisation of capitalism may effectively be contained, if not resolved, within new relations of domination. Gramsci's rejection of the notion of capitalism's inevitable downfall and his related critique of economism are the basis for his view that capitalist relations of domination can only be brought to an end by the political intervention or initiative of the subordinate working-class movement. However Gramsci's notion of political activity was not, as in Lenin, limited to the sphere of the political state but included the creation of a class's moral and intellectual (i.e. cultural) predominance or 'hegemony' (see below and Chapter 3) in the sphere of civil society which Gramsci included in his concept of

the 'integral state'.

The second major historical development which directly influenced Gramsci's theory of politics, which we have already touched on above, involved the social upheaval which followed Italy's defeat during the First World War and the political struggle which subsequently erupted between the Italian parties of the Left and the Right. The victory of the Italian Fascist Party in 1922 deepened the crisis of the demoralised and disorganised Left and led to Gramsci's arrest in 1926. And it was during Gramsci's internment, which ended with his release from prison shortly before his death in 1937, that he devoted a great deal of attention to the reasons for the failure of the Left, not only but especially in Italy, to develop adequate strategies to deal with the threat of fascism. It is important that Gramsci did not regard fascism as merely reactionary or backward. Gramsci argued that the rise of fascism must in part be ascribed to the advanced way in which it addressed the problems thrown up by the long-term 'organic' crisis of the liberal state. For Gramsci an important element in the defeat of the Left was its failure to recognise the relative sophistication of the fascist strategy and its success in decapitating its political opposition and incorporate much of the latter's mass-base into its own movement (Gramsci, 1986: 119-120, 156, 203, 210-211, etc.).

A third historical dimension to Gramsci's theory of politics, and one which informs his analyses of the Russian Revolution and fascism, were the implications for the working-class movement of the economic and political re-organisation of advanced Western societies in the face of the severe socio-economic crisis resulting from the Great Depression. Gramsci did not initiate the debate in the European communist movement regarding the particular problems of constructing socialism in the West. Yet he was the first Marxist to develop a comprehensive theory of revolution specific to the conditions of advanced Western societies in which the relationship of the state and society dif-

ferred in very important respects to that of Lenin's Russia. This distinction is emphasised, however implicitly at times, throughout Gramsci's mature political writing (Gramsci, 1986: 229-239, 242-243, etc.).

As important as it is to take these historical dimensions into account when analysing Gramsci's political thought, there is a danger of their over-emphasis (Bellamy, 1992). A more serious error has been the tendency by some commentators to trivialise Gramsci's contribution to the general theory of Marxism. This is, for example, the thrust of McLennan's treatment of Gramsci in his otherwise valuable book Marxism, Pluralism and Beyond:

'There is arguably less general theory in Gramsci than in any other major marxist theorist: his principal concern is to assess and reorder the political and ideological configuration of socio-cultural values' (McLennan, 1987: 117).

As against this view I will argue that although Gramsci's thought is not easily accessible, making the problem of balance in one's approach to him all the more important, he was indeed, in Hoare's words,

'the greatest Marxist Western Europe has produced in this century, and the one from whom there is most to be learned' (Hoare, 1978: xxiv).

And as Mercer argues, Gramsci's significance as a Marxist theoretician lay in his awareness of the need for, and his contribution towards, a theoretical reconstruction within Marxism (Mercer, 1980: 103-105). More particularly, Gramsci's rejection of 'orthodox' Marxism's economic determinism and political reductionism was central to his political theory. This concern to free Marxism from orthodox dogma underlay most of Gramsci's writing, and most especially his prison notebooks. Moreover, as most notable Gramscian scholars and commentators have observed, Gramsci's revaluation of historical materialism to a great extent revolves on his concept of 'hegemony' (e.g. Sassoon, 1987; Buci-Glucksmann, 1982; Mouffe, 1979; Morera, 1990; Bobbio, 1988; de Giovanni, 1979; Simon, 1987; Femia, 1987; etc.). Furthermore,

Gramsci's focus on 'consensual politics' with his concept of hegemony has served as a basis for interesting recent work towards re-establishing democracy as the central issue in Marxist discourse, as well as of socialist thought more generally (Mercer,1980; Sassoon,1980; Hall,1980; Laclau and Mouffe,1989).

My analysis of Gramsci's politics will proceed against its background in Marx's materialist conception of history, or historical materialism. In Chapter 1 I will introduce two major 'Western' conceptions of the state and politics, to be termed the unitarian and pluralist conceptions of politics respectively, by way of a brief analysis of their origins in the political thought of Ancient Greece. Thus in section 1.1 the Ancient Greek concept of the polis or city-state will be introduced to serve as the basis for a comparative overview, in section 1.2, of the concepts of the state and politics in Plato and Aristotle. I will argue that Plato envisaged an ideal state characterised by an extensive degree of social and political unity; an early form of 'communism' (Plato,1987). The discussion of Plato will serve as a starting point for analysing Marx's unitary conception of the state and politics in sections 1.4 and Chapter 2. In section 1.4 I will also discuss the influence on the young Marx of Hegel's unitary concepts of the state and politics, highlighting some important Platonic elements in Hegel's theory of the state.

In section 1.2 I will argue that Plato's ideal state was a target of much of Aristotle's writing on the state and politics, and of the latter's rejection of Plato's unitary concept of the state (Aristotle,1981). Contrary to Plato Aristotle conceived the state as a diversified or 'pluralistic' community of individuals. I will argue that Aristotle's early political pluralism can thus serve as a point of departure for understanding the state and politics in modern liberal pluralism. In section 1.3 this will be illustrated with reference to the thought of Bernard Crick who bases his liberal pluralism directly on Aristotle's classical conception of the state and politics (Crick,1973). Crick's

liberal pluralism will, in turn, serve as the contrasting background for my analysis of Marx's unitary concepts of the state and politics as well as providing a link to Gramsci's dualistic concepts of the state and politics which formed the basis for the latter's 'Marxist pluralism'. As I will argue in later chapters, Gramsci's 'pluralist' theory of politics is an important contribution towards resolving the central problem of pluralism for Marxist theory, namely that

'Marxists can readily recognize plurality and to a considerable extent embrace it politically and descriptively; but marxism will always encounter great difficulty in attempting to theorize non-class constraints, because this involves the kind of causal and ontological equivalence amongst factors, which virtually dissolves marxism as an explanatory project' (McLennan, 1987: 118-119).

My account of Marx's concepts of the state and politics will be divided into three parts. Firstly, in section 1.4. I will explore the influence which the political thought of Hegel and Feuerbach had on the young Marx. In section 1.4.1 I will outline Hegel's concept of the state with particular reference to its formulation in his Philosophy of Right (Hegel, 1981). In section 1.4.2 I will highlight the main elements of Marx's 1843 Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (Marx, 1843). The 1843 Critique contains, inter alia, a brilliant analysis of Hegel's concept of the state (and politics). And although Marx's own concepts of the state and politics remained implicit in this work I will argue that the 1843 Critique nonetheless contains Marx's key political ideas in embryonic form. In conclusion to Chapter 1 I will outline the influence which Feuerbach's radical humanism had on Marx's break with the Young Hegelians as well as on Marx's historical materialist perspective. The second part of my discussion of Marx will commence in Chapter 2. In section 2.1 I will give an account of Marx's 1843 articles On the Jewish Question (Marx, 1843 (2)) and Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right

(Marx,1844), as well as the 1844 Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (Marx,1844 (2)). The basis for the discussion in section 2.1 will be the significance of these early works for Marx's transition to his materialist conception of history first formulated in The German Ideology (Marx,1846) of 1846. The discussion of historical materialism in section 2.2.1 constitutes the third part of my account of Marx's political thought in the course of which I will introduce some of the most important concepts in historical materialism, which constituted the foundation of Marx's mature political thought. I will argue that in first advancing the fundamental theses of historical materialism the mature Marx conceived the material relations of production as the basis of social relations as well as of the form and function of the political state. In other words, for Marx the state derived its form and function from society's social relations which were, in turn, shaped by the prevailing mode of production. Marx's conception of the determinate relation between the historical modes of material production and the social, political and ideological relations of different social formations constituted a radical inversion of Hegel's idealistic philosophy. Hegel conceived of the bourgeois state as an end in itself; a rational social collectivity which as the guardian of the collective interest of all its members intervenes to order and harmonise civil society's conflictual and particularistic interests and class relations. For Hegel the bourgeois state transcended antagonistic socio-economic relations in a dialectical process (Hegel,1981).

Although in Marx's view the bourgeois state did arise from the need to regulate conflictual social relations in civil society, contrary to Hegel Marx viewed this state in capitalist society as essentially a class state, the political expression of the bourgeoisie's economic and social dominance and an essential means of ensuring that dominance. Marx argued that the bourgeois state could therefore neither transcend civil society's conflictual interests and classes nor could it represent and uphold society's general interest (Marx,1843). It was on this basis of

the state as a classbound institution that Marx's concept of politics as the struggle between antagonistic classes in society emerged.

As background to the discussion of Gramsci's theory of politics in Chapters 3 and 4 I will outline the problem of 'economism' in orthodox Marxism in section 2.2.2, which constitutes the bridge to my analysis of Gramsci's theory of politics in subsequent chapters. Section 2.2.2 will address the problem of 'economic determinism' in the conception of the state as well as the pronounced 'reductionism' of the class-based concept of politics which pervaded the Marxism of the Second and Third Internationals. These were tendencies which were intertwined with the 'monistic' character of orthodox Marxism's political theory. Of direct concern to my theme of Gramsci's politics, and the object of much of Gramsci's important political writing, is the 'vulgar' economism of Second and Third International Marxisms. Section 2.2.2 will thus serve as the context for introducing Gramsci's revaluation of historical materialism to which his concepts of hegemony and the state as well as his radical critique of economism are most central.

My analysis of Gramsci's politics will commence in Chapter 3 with a discussion of the dual nature of Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' which constituted the organising concept of his prison notes. The discussion in Chapter 3 will be divided into two main sections. In section 3.1 I will describe the first meaning which Gramsci attached to his concept of hegemony which I will then relate to his concepts of the political party, the intellectuals and ideology. More specifically I will argue that in this first meaning Gramsci's concept of hegemony refers to the transformation of a subordinate class's economic-corporate consciousness, i.e. a class consciousness limited to economic interests, into a fully fledged political consciousness which constitutes the basis for its counter-strategy or hegemonic project against the dominant social class or group. On Gramsci's view the role of

intellectuals, the political party and ideology should be related to their function in the creation of a class's hegemonic consciousness.

In section 3.2 I will describe the second meaning of Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Following on from section 3.1 I will show that in Gramsci's view a subordinate class which seeks to establish its complete predominance in society must not only attain economic dominance as well as governmental (i.e. narrowly political) power but must also establish its intellectual and moral (i.e. cultural) leadership amongst a broad cross-section of society's social classes and groups. For Gramsci a class's economic and political domination of society presupposes that class's intellectual and moral leadership which it 'exercises, indeed must exercise, through the 'private' hegemonic apparatuses (e.g. schools and trade unions) located in the sphere of civil society. Gramsci included civil society in his extended concept of the 'integral state'. For Gramsci, therefore, the state is understood not only as the coercive governmental apparatuses of society (which he refers to as 'political society') but also involves the 'private' hegemonic apparatuses of civil society through which a fundamental social class seeks to win the consent of the governed as the basis of its economic and political dominance.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony and his extended definition of the state had important implications for his concept of politics. In Chapter 4 I will focus on the question of Gramsci's critical recasting of historical materialism against the background of his critique of economism and his emphasis of a dialectical reading of Marx's classical texts, with particular reference to Gramsci's emphasis of Marx's now famous, and controversial, Preface to A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy. On the basis of Gramsci's revaluation of historical materialism I will then, in section 4.2, describe the dual perspective underlying Gramsci's broadening of Marx's class-based concept of politics. Thus I will

relate the distinction Gramsci made between the spheres of civil society and political society in his concept of the 'integral state', i.e. the spheres of hegemony and coercion respectively, to his dual concept of politics according to which he distinguished between the functions of coercive and consensual political activity aimed at the founding of a new state.

And finally, in my concluding chapter I will highlight the main implications of Gramsci's 'Marxist pluralism' for the broader Marxist tradition, focusing on the Gramsci's revaluation of the orthodox Marxist notion of democracy.

CHAPTER 1

THE STATE AND POLITICS

The central purpose of this chapter is to provide the historical and theoretical context for the discussion, in subsequent chapters, of Marx and Gramsci's conceptions of the state and politics.

The approach decided upon here entails broadly outlining two major conceptions of the state and politics in Ancient Greek political thought as a theoretical context for distinguishing between modern unitarian and pluralistic conceptions of the state and politics in senses to be defined shortly. In later sections of this chapter this focus will be narrowed to the manner in which these concepts of the state and politics may be said to have anticipated the modern debate between exponents of unitarian and pluralistic concepts of the state and politics. More specifically, we will be concerned with the extent to which they may usefully be employed to illustrate the important theoretical contribution of Antonio Gramsci to the Marxist concept of the state and politics within the tradition of Marxist political thought.

Starting with a general introductory description of the Ancient Greek 'polis' or state in section 1.1, the discussion in section 1.2 will focus on Plato and Aristotle's respective concepts of the state and politics. More specifically, Aristotle's 'pluralistic' conception of the state and politics will be contrasted with Plato's 'unitarian' conception. This will then be related in section 1.3 to a discussion of 'modern political pluralism', as well as providing a broad context for a discussion of Gramsci's 'Marxist pluralism' in Chapter 3 onwards. Plato's 'unitary' conception of the state and politics will, in turn, serve to provide a broadly illustrative theoretical context for the discussion of Marx's 'monistic' or unitarian conception of the state and politics, in section 1.4 as well as in Chapter 2.

The intention here is certainly not to suggest that there exists any linear relation between these ancient and modern conceptions of politics. Rather it is hoped that this approach may serve to articulate certain fundamental concepts and issues which have persisted in the complex tradition of Western political thought.

The discussion of Marx's conception of the state and politics will be divided into two parts: section 1.4.1 addresses the question of the influence on Marx of Hegel's political thought, with particular reference to the concepts of civil society, the state, and politics. The underlying theme of the latter section will be the implicit concept of the state and politics contained in Marx's earlier critique of Hegel's concept of the state. In section 1.4.2 I will provide a brief discussion of the influence of Ludwig Feuerbach's 'radical humanism' on the young Marx. I will argue that Feuerbach made a substantial contribution to Marx's break with the Young Hegelians, a theoretical transition characterised by Feuerbachian categories but which in due course led Marx also to reject the undialectical nature of Feuerbach's materialism. Section 1.4 will thus serve to address the question of the link between the unitarian concept of politics in Plato and in Marx with reference to Marx's rejection of the duality of state and civil society in Hegel's conception of society.

1. The Concept Of The State And Politics In Plato And Aristotle

1.1 The Greek 'Polis'

In the extensive body of literature on the political theory of Ancient Greece it has frequently been argued that Plato and Aristotle may be regarded as the two founding fathers of Western political thought, a view based on the generally acknowledged influence their concepts of the state and politics have retained through the centuries, transcending the ancient city-state era to inform modern conceptions of the state and politics (see for example Sinclair in Aristotle, 1981: 18, 24; also Lee, 1987: 32). The context in which Plato and Aristotle's conceptions of politics and the state took shape was that of the Greek polis, and the

particular way in which they interpreted the nature of the polis (both in ideal and 'actual' form), it will be argued, is the key to their respective concepts of politics. For this reason the discussion of their concepts of the state and politics will be preceded, in this section, by a brief account of the general characteristics of the Greek polis.

Over and above the question of its relative size (generally far smaller in area and total population than the modern nation-state) the ancient Greek city-state or polis had two further general characteristics, on the one hand its unity and solidarity, and on the other its limited membership (see Sinclair in Aristotle, 1981: 24). The polis functioned as a tightly woven organic structure in which 'private' (the individual and the household) and 'public' (community) spheres were far less pronounced or differentiated than in the modern (bourgeois) state. The structural 'organicity' of the polis coupled to the restrictions which were placed on the granting of any citizenship to its members (for example the exclusion of slaves from any rights to citizenship) produced a state form which 'embraced a much smaller proportion of the population but a much larger share in the daily lives of each' (Sinclair in Aristotle, 1981: 24) than is generally the case in the modern state.

The highest interest in the polis was the city-state itself, and for individuals the supreme good consisted in securing a recognised place in the life and activities of the city. The highest glory, therefore, was citizenship; membership in the common life of the polis. The politeia or constitution of the polis was a mode of life rather than merely a formal legal structure (see Aristotle, 1981: 167-185; Plato, 1987: 356-9). The central theme in Ancient Greek theory of the polis concerned the harmony of this common life, with little distinction made between the various elements of the polis. The theory of the polis 'was at once ethics, sociology, and economics, as well as politics in the narrower modern sense' (Sabine, 1971: 13, also 100; see also

Lee,1987: 32). Consequently the law of the polis was 'the source of all standards of human life, and... the virtue of the individual is the same as the virtue of the citizen' (Jaeger,1987: 32; see also Sabine,1971: 94-8, 100).

If Plato and Aristotle both emphasized the subordination of the individual's private interests to those of the citizen and hence the polis, this may be said to reflect the dominance of the communal ethic underlying much of Greek political theory. However, the term 'community' and the particular role and place of the 'individual' (both private and public) within it, were subject to diverse interpretation. As we shall see, Aristotle challenged the Platonic preoccupation with the primary role of the 'public individual' or citizen as subordinated to the interests of the polis. Nevertheless his theory of politics and the state is also imbued with a strong ethical bias (see Aristotle,1981: 179-183). He, like Plato, investigated the question of the nature of an 'ideal state' (see for example Aristotle,1981: 101-109), the state as a 'type'. It was in their respective portrayals of this ideal, however, that they differed so markedly; a difference, so it will be argued, that to a large extent is reflected in their differing concepts of politics. This distinction is perhaps most dramatically illustrated in Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Politics, the latter largely a product of Aristotle's extended criticism of Plato's concept of the polis and politics as formulated in the Republic. Section 1.2 will highlight this critique, commencing with a brief account of the general characteristics of the polis in Plato, followed by a more detailed description of the origin of the polis, and the relation of the individual to the polis, in Aristotle. The section will then conclude with an account of the nature of the polis in Plato and Aristotle -- in the course of which their respective concepts of politics will be identified and elaborated.

1.2 Plato And Aristotle: Their Concepts Of The State And Politics
It is generally accepted that the institution of the polis con-

stitutes the main focal point of Plato's theory of politics. More controversially, Plato also elevated the interests of the polis above all else, including the lives and interests of its individual members, the citizens (Lee, 1987: 54-5). It should nevertheless be noted that Plato did not conceive of the polis in the abstract, i.e. as an entity apart from the individuals of which it is composed:

'Well, we are bound to admit that the elements and traits that belong to a state must also exist in the individuals that compose it. There is nowhere else for them to come from'

And further:

'Societies aren't made of sticks and stones, but of men whose individual characters, by turning the scale one way or another, determine the direction of the whole' (Plato, 1987: 358).

However when Plato referred to the polis he emphasised the ideal of communality, of the need to cultivate and promote binding communal relations between the individuals of which it is composed:

'in the perfect state women and children should be held in common... men and women should share the same education and the same occupations both in peace and war, and... they should be governed by those of their number who are best at philosophy and war... when our Rulers are appointed, they will take the soldiers and settle them in accomodation... where there are no private quarters but everything is common to all' (Plato, 1987: 356-357).

To this ideal state of 'communism', to which corresponds an ideal type of individual (see Plato, 1987: 357), Plato couterposed what he regarded as imperfect societies, that is those of 'timarchy', 'oligarchy', 'tyranny' and 'democracy'. Of the latter forms of society, the first three are to varying extents elitist, aristocratic and militaristic in nature. However, Plato argued, the democratic society is quite distinct from all other types of societies, characterised by a lack of individual restraint, self-discipline and integrity. For Plato these characteristics lend

themselves to individual excess and the loss of the drive towards excellence in all spheres of life (Plato,1987: 373, 374). Furthermore the selection of democratic society's leadership is determined 'by lot', that is by popular election, with little or no regard for the suitability of candidates. Plato regarded these democratic characteristics and principles as quite contrary to good sense. Moreover since democracies typically prioritize 'liberty and freedom of speech' as well as every individual's freedom 'to do as he likes', giving rise to a society in which there will be 'the greatest variety of individual character' (Plato,1987: 375), there is consequently

'no compulsion either to exercise authority if you are capable of it, or to submit to authority if you don't want to... Democracy doesn't mind what the habits and background of its politicians are; provided they profess themselves the people's friends... It's an agreeable anarchic form of society' (Plato,1987: 376, 377).

The hostility expressed in the Republic towards the Greek concept of democracy is, of course, a manifestation of Plato's aversion to Athenian society, but is developed by Plato as a general philosophical premiss. More importantly, for our purposes, it is the corollary of his communal ethic. Plato emphasized the importance of order and coherence in society and stressed the need for planning and central authority - the power to order society. His was an essentially centralist and unitary view of the polis, derived partly from his utopianism and partly from his recognition that to enact a rational blue-print or plan of an ideal state, the 'Guardian' rulers require the requisite authority and power, 'their function being to see that friends at home shall not wish, nor foes abroad be able, to harm our [ideal] state' (Plato,1987: 180, see 182, 196-224). Accordingly only the best, the 'truly just and good', can and must rule (Plato,1987: 358). Plato thus provided a paradigmatic expression of the unitary conception of politics and the state.

It was this idealised and unitary Platonic conception of the

function of the polis and the nature of human society to which Aristotle devoted much criticism and from which he derived great insight. Aristotle's Politics commences as follows:

'Observation tells us that every state is an association, and that every association is formed with a view to some good purpose... Clearly then, as associations aim at some good, that association which is most sovereign among them all and embraces all others will aim highest, i.e. at the most sovereign of all goods. This is the association which we call the state, the association which is "political"' (emphases added) (Aristotle, 1981: 54).

This notion of the polis as an association, and thus inherently pluralistic, is then systematically developed by Aristotle. Arguing that in principle those who depend on others for their survival must unite in pairs, Aristotle (who propounded an historical doctrine of the state) sought to identify the natural evolutionary origin of the polis in what he considered the two primary types of human association, namely:

1. the natural union of male and female; and,
2. the mutual relation of 'the natural ruler and ruled, for the purpose of preservation' (Aristotle, 1981: 56, 57).

Aristotle therefore begins his analysis of the origin of the polis by describing the natural primary human association of the household, consisting of the association of men with women and slaves (Aristotle, 1981: 58), in addition to the relation of division between the ruler and the ruled which, according to this view, is a natural one rooted in differing inherent human capacities or aptitudes. These primary relationships constitute a uniting 'common interest' (Aristotle, 1981: 57). However although the formation of the primary human associations is a reflection of man's natural desire for, and need of, unity, Aristotle did not equate unity with uniformity (see below).

A further stage in the natural evolution of human associations, Aristotle argued, 'is the village, the first association of a number of houses [households] for the satisfaction of something

more than daily needs' (Aristotle, 1981: 58).

The polis or state is the final form of association - an amalgamation of several villages (Aristotle, 1981: 59). The polis is thus composed of all the other forms of human association and community, and is their 'end'. The aim and end of the polis itself is perfection; 'and self-sufficiency is both end and perfection' (Aristotle, 1981: 59; see Mulgan, 1977: 16). The polis is therefore a natural phenomenon as it 'evolves as a direct extension of the first nucleus of human organization, the family' (Bobbio, 1988: 183) and serves to secure life itself, as well as to 'secure the good life' (Aristotle, 1981: 59). Aristotle thus viewed the polis as sovereign, natural (i.e. a natural means and end), self-sufficient and political. Conversely the form of human association or community which is political is the state. The premiss underlying all else is that human beings are 'political animals' (politikon zoon) (Aristotle, 1981: 59, 60).

Two aspects are here of crucial importance with regard to Aristotle's concept of politics. Firstly, Aristotle viewed the state as constituted of individuals and associations of individuals who cooperate, at the very least in order to ensure survival, and ultimately to strive after the best life possible. Individual men are thus dependent on each other not only in order to ensure the survival of the species, but also in order to enhance the individual life by means of interaction and cooperation. Furthermore, as the state comes into being naturally, and inasmuch as nature is itself an end, the state, i.e. the association of human individuals in all its forms, constitutes the natural end of all human association - the nature of the state thus reflects the nature of man.

This brings us to the second point, i.e. the nature of man according to Aristotle. At the outset Aristotle defined the human individual as belonging to the genus animal, but specifically as a political animal distinguished, thereby, from all others. As

the state, a natural entity, is the supreme and political form of human association, it follows that man is distinguished by his natural capacity in, and naturally determined need for, life in a state. In short, man lives by nature in a state, and is therefore political by nature - hence man the 'Political zoon'. However, this account of Aristotle's view of the origin of the state and its relation to human nature does not dispense with the need to focus more directly on Aristotle's concept of politics per se. This, it will be argued, may best be accomplished by combining Aristotle's view of the general relation of the human individual to the state with his account of alternative state forms.

In book two of the Politics Aristotle presents the reader with three alternative state forms or types, the analyses of which reveal, amongst other things, Aristotle's concept of politics. They are:

1. All citizens of a state having all things in common, i.e. wives, children and property;
2. All citizens having nothing in common; or,
3. Some combination of communality and severality (Aristotle, 1981: 101-102).

Aristotle rejected the second alternative at the outset, arguing that it would be a contradiction, a nonsense, as the polis must of necessity involve some form of association (Aristotle, 1981: 54, 101-102). The first alternative posits a view of the polis as characterized by extreme communality and unity, or 'communism'. This forms the critical target of book two of the Politics which commences with the question:

'whether it is better to remain in our present condition [of separate families and private property] or to follow the rule of life laid down in the Republic' (Aristotle, 1946: 40).

For Aristotle the answer to this entailed evaluating the underlying world view propounded in Plato's Republic according to which 'children, wives, and property ought to be held in common' (Aristotle, 1981: 102; see Plato, 1987: 237-242, 356), and the

state 'should be as much in unity as possible' (Aristotle, 1946: 40; Aristotle, 1981: 104, also 111; see Plato, 1987: 356-7). Aristotle asked whether Plato's ideal state would, in fact, constitute a state at all (Aristotle, 1981: 104, 105, etc.), and argued that in any event the proposed means or scheme for realizing it is impracticable (Aristotle, 1981: 107-9; see also Lee, 1987: 16, 21, 22, 44). For, as Aristotle said, underscoring the inherent plurality of politics on his view,

'it is obvious that a polis which goes on and on, and becomes more and more of a unit, will eventually cease to be a polis at all. A polis by its nature is some sort of aggregation' (Aristotle, 1946: 40).

Or in a different translation:

'is it not obvious that a state may at length attain such a degree of unity as to be no longer a state? - since the nature of a state is to be a plurality...' (Aristotle, 1988: 21).

This for our purposes, arguably, represents the central idea of the Politics, namely that the state is by nature 'aggregative' - it is in essence a 'pluralistic human association'. Pursuing the Platonic goal of 'unity', i.e. the unity of opinion and sentiment and moral standards, therefore not only restricts the practice of free thought central to the functioning of the polis, but in so doing endangers the existence of the polis itself. Aristotle argued that there is:

'a point at which a polis, by advancing in unity, will cease to be a polis; there is another point, short of that, at which it may still remain a polis, but will none the less come near to losing its essence, and will thus be a worse polis. It is as if you were to turn harmony into mere unison, or to reduce a theme to a single beat' (Aristotle, 1946: 51).

As has already been noted, Aristotle did not fail to recognize that a state to exist at all requires a degree of cohesion and unity. This he acknowledged in his concluding argument against

Platonic unity or 'doctrine of communism' (see Politics, Book 2, Chapter 5). After all 'the polis... is an aggregate of many members' (Aristotle, 1946: 51). However in Aristotle's view the polis or political association transcends any mere quantitative aggregation. It is qualitatively differentiated:

'for similars cannot bring [a polis] into existence'
(Aristotle, 1946: 41).

If it is 'reciprocal equivalence' that ensures the existence of the state (Aristotle, 1981: 104), the polis is not a 'natural unity' in the sense of being an undifferentiated unity. After all:

'a household is a more self-sufficient thing than the individual, the state than the household; and the moment the association comes to comprise enough people to be self-sufficient, effectively we have a state. Since, then, a greater degree of self-sufficiency is to be preferred to a lesser, the lesser degree of unity is to be preferred to the greater' (Aristotle, 1981: 105-6).

A 'genuine' unity, therefore, consisted for Aristotle not of a mere communality of means and ends, but, rather, in a dynamic and symbiotic interaction of differentiated means in pursuit of a non-monolithic, or differentiated, end. A polis accordingly requires members of varied capacities who mutually support and complement one another through an 'exchange of services' and thereby attain a higher and better form of life (Aristotle, 1981: 104). Aristotle is thus linking the 'political' with diversity, differentiation, plurality; and the political association or polis with the aggregation or plurality of qualitatively differentiated individuals. Aristotle's concept of political activity is therefore linked to the concept of the autonomous yet responsible and socially integrated individual within the context of a state characterized by tolerance, i.e. of a state directed towards accommodating human diversity and not towards instituting conformity.

Thus it may be said that it was Aristotle's political 'pluralism'

which led him to reject of Plato's 'unitary' conception of politics and his 'centralist' conception of an ideal state. Hence,

'what Aristotle calls the ideal state is always Plato's second-best state. The rejection of communism... shows that the ideal state of [Plato's] Republic was never entertained by Aristotle, even as an ideal. His ideal was always constitutional and never despotic rule, even though it were the enlightened despotism of the philosopher-king' (emphasis added) (Sabine, 1971: 93, also 94-8, 116; see Bobbio, 1988: 73-7).

Aristotle's treatment of politics characteristically incorporated the notion of human diversity, and hence the need for and desirability of a variety of institutions and diversity of pattern. At root lay a pluralistic concept of politics (Lee, 1987: 55). It is this pluralistic conception of politics which has, throughout the history of Western political thought, stood in challenge to the (Platonic) unitary concept of politics.

1.3 Modern Political Pluralism

In the above sections Plato's unitary concept of the state and politics was contrasted with Aristotle's political pluralism, with the emphasis on Aristotle's critique of Plato. The discussion in this section seeks to 'extend' this through an examination of the conception of the state and politics which, arguably, constitutes the most important alternative to the Marxist conception, i.e. modern political pluralism. To this end Bernard Crick's concept of the state and politics, which he describes as derived from Aristotle's Politics, as formulated in his In Defence of Politics, has been selected as broadly representative of this view. The intention here is certainly not to suggest that Crick's is the only or most important non-Marxist pluralistic concept of politics. Yet his is a concise and richly suggestive conception useful as a starting point for a comparative analysis. In the course of the discussion reference will be made to the relation between the concept of politics and the notions of

democracy, freedom and the state. The purpose of this discussion is the provision of a theoretical background for later sections (see chapter 2 onwards) in which, amongst other related topics, the challenge of political pluralism to Marxist unitarianism will be examined.

Echoing Aristotle, Crick commences with the argument that politics - the political act - arises 'in organized states which recognize themselves to be an aggregate of many members, not a single tribe, religion, interest, or tradition'. Politics is the consequence of the 'simultaneous existence of different traditions, within a territorial unit under a common rule'. Precisely how the unit was formed is not relevant. What is relevant is whether the social structure is sufficiently complex and divided, so making politics 'a plausible response to the problem of governing it, the problem of maintaining order at all' (Crick, 1973: 18).

Crick interprets Aristotle's rejection of Plato's unitarian ideal as a rejection of the individual's subordination to either state or despot. Consequently, a political order marks:

'the birth, or the recognition of freedom... politics represents at least some tolerance of differing truths, some recognition that government is possible, indeed best conducted, amid the open canvassing of rival interests. Politics are the public actions of free men. Freedom is the privacy of man from public actions' (Crick, 1973: 18).

Crick maintains that such a political order relies on a distinctive method of rule, i.e.:

1. engaging society's diverse and divergent groupings in an ongoing dialogue, so encouraging articulation of interests;
2. pursuing the greatest possible conciliation of competing values and interests; and,
3. the establishment of a legal framework ensuring and reflecting the legal status of the various interests, geared in turn to enhancing a sense of security and contributing

towards the clearest and safest possible means of interest articulation (Crick,1973: 18-19).

This pluralist 'process' is what distinguishes the specifically political order and method of rule from 'tyranny, oligarchy, kingship, dictatorship, despotism, and... totalitarianism' (Crick,1973: 19). The political order is one in which interests are conciliated by means of proportionally shared power accorded in line with the relative contribution to the overall community's welfare. The political system

'is that type of government where politics proves successful in ensuring reasonable stability and order... no finality [being implied] in any act of conciliation or compromise' (Crick,1973: 21-2; see also Polan,1984: 132).

A political doctrine is 'a coherently related set of proposals for the conciliation of actual social demands in relation to a scarcity of resources' (Crick,1973: 32).

The mere presence of political activity must, therefore, not be confused with a political system properly constituted, for to some degree all systems of government can incorporate political elements. However, truly political systems assume or presuppose the need for tolerance and incorporation of diverse groups and interests, viewing politics not merely as a means to an ideological end. Politics is the 'mechanism' of social demand articulation, dependent on the individual's ongoing activity (Crick,1973: 23). The common good of any society is not to be confused with a particular ideology. Rather it is:

'the process of practical reconciliation of the interests of the various "sciences", aggregates or groups which compose the state' (Crick,1973: 23-4).

The moral consensus of a free state is constituted by the political activity which takes place in it. The 'end' of a political society is not some a-priori ideological blue-print, but tolerance of human diversity. The 'means' to that 'end', moreover, is political activity itself.

In this view, then, political societies are not merely plural, i.e. aggregates characterised by diversity, they are pluralistic, i.e. aggregates or states in which diverse groups and interests interact politically in the process of demand articulation. Crick's pluralistic concept of politics underlies his normative understanding of the classical notion of politics in terms of democracy (unlike Aristotle who judged democracy in a manner that was 'axiomatically negative' (Bobbio, 1988: 93)) and freedom, a liberal understanding of politics, in short: liberal-democratic pluralism.

In the remaining sections of this chapter, one of the themes which will be introduced is Marx's rejection of the pluralistic concept of the state and politics. Although this will not serve as the central focus of these sections, which will deal primarily with the relation of Hegel and Feuerbach to Marx, Marx's critique of Hegel was in important respects also an affirmation of the latter's rejection of pluralism and of his construction of a unitary or 'organic' conception of human society. Marx embraced Hegel's view that in the face of extreme conflict in civil society, arising as a direct consequence of the articulated disjuncture between the spheres of civil society and political society in modern pluralistic (i.e. 'liberal') society, liberal pluralism's emphasis of the individual's will as the reason of the state was unsustainable. Marx, it is true, rejected Hegel's view of the state as the regulator of conflictual civil relations. However Marx saw in Hegel's dialectical account of society's relations a basis for his materialistic theory of society's dialectical unity, i.e. of the dialectical relation between civil society and the state rooted in the economic relations of civil society. It is to this relation between Hegel's and Marx's conceptions of society to which we now turn.

1.4 Marx's 'Early' Political Writing

'Marx did not develop a single, coherent theory of politics' (Carnoy, 1984: 45). Indeed his work on a theory of politics

remained largely incomplete, implicit and unarticulated (see for example, Sassoon,1987; Jessop,1984; Miliband,1988). Any reading of Marx's political writing is therefore fraught with problems, not the least of which is the difficult exercise of ascertaining Marx's concepts of the state and politics both in his earlier works (i.e. prior to the German Ideology) as well as in his more mature works in the tradition of 'historical materialism'. An open mind is essential in this search for, as Derek Sayer reminds us, to transform Marx's 'texts into sacred tablets is to make a mockery of the critical spirit that animates everything he wrote' (Sayer,1989: xxii). After all it was Marx himself who maintained that it is wise and prudent in life to 'doubt everything' (Marx,1989: 2).

Section 1.4 is intended as a general outline of the influence of Hegel and Feuerbach on Marx's early political writing with special reference to the guiding question of the unitarian concepts of the state and politics in Plato and Marx. The discussion will be divided into three sub-sections. Beginning with a brief overview of Hegel's conceptions of the state and politics in 1.4.1, the focus in 1.4.2 will shift to Marx's critique of Hegel's concept of the state and politics, with particular reference to Marx's early work The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. In the final sub-section Marx's critique of Ludwig Feuerbach's radical anthropocentric humanism will be explored with a view to highlighting the influence Feuerbach's rejection of German idealism had on the direction of the young Marx's 'materialist' political perspective.

1.4.1 The State And Politics In Hegel

Hegel's political writing was probably the greatest single influence on the development of Marx's conception of the state and politics (see Held,1987: 53; Jessop,1984: 2-7, 8). In particular Hegel's work the Philosophy of Right served as one of the greatest formative stimuli on Marx's early political thought. A central theme of Hegel's later work is the relationship of the

human individual to the economic and social institutions governing his life, and the relation of the latter to the institution of the state, to which Hegel accorded a unique rational status (Hegel, 1981: 155-156). The Philosophy of Right was a systematic and coherent expression of Hegel's 'vision of society as an organic, harmonious whole which, especially in his youth, he believed had been realized in the Greek city states of antiquity' (Callinicos, 1987: 32).

The starting point of Hegel's political philosophy was a critique of liberal individualism. Hegel took issue with the dominant theme of Anglo-French philosophy of the Age of Enlightenment, namely the doctrine of inalienable individual rights expressed for example in the works of Locke and Adam Smith. Hegel's critique of individualism was, in part, based on a different interpretation of the transformation of feudal society by the French Revolution (Kolakowski, 1987 (1): 39; also Sabine, 1971: 650). In the liberal view, the rise of the absolute monarchy heralded the demise of feudalism, and the French Revolution represented the triumph of the rights of man over dictatorial monarchy. In this view, notably argued by Locke, Rousseau and Adam Smith, the end of feudalism heralded the establishment in society of the distinct spheres of civil society and the state. Civil society, although overtly conflictual in nature, was in fact characterised by an underlying coherence and unity. The French Revolution thus represented the attainment of individual liberty, constitutionally regulated government by consent, and officialdom bound by their responsibility to a nation-wide electorate. (Walton, 1987: 128; Arthur, 1985: 6).

Although Hegel did not simply dismiss these claims, he took issue with certain aspects of these supposed revolutionary 'achievements' of the European bourgeoisie. Thus, although agreeing that the post-feudal era of modern Absolutism produced a more unified and centralized form of territorial rule with greater law and order, in Hegel's view neither the rise of the absolutist

monarchy nor bourgeois ascendancy and revolution ensured the complete elimination of feudalism (Hegel, 1956: 399). For Hegel the destruction of feudalism was to be viewed as a dialectical process (Hegel, 1981: 34-35) whose formal achievement (i.e. its constitutional expression) was not to be equated with the actual elimination of all residues of feudal forms. In principle Hegel agreed that the emergence of the absolute monarchy heralded the demise of feudalism as a system or order. And in his view the Revolution did in principle rid society of its formal feudal foundations (institutions, social relations, etc.) in addition to bringing the national state into existence as the accumulative result of monarchial centralization and revolutionary constitutional-republicanism (Hegel, 1956: 400, 403-404, 448; see Hall, 1987: 7-8; Jessop, 1984: 8; Sabine, 1971: 650). However, in Hegel's view despite the Revolution's pursuit of the ideals of liberty and equality, it brought about the perpetuation of feudalism in another form (i.e. after undergoing a complex transmutation): the French Revolution leveled the functional differences between men in their social capacities to a 'common and abstract political equality' (establishing only formal political, and not real social equality) and reduced the 'institutions of both society and the state to utilitarian devices' (Sabine, 1971: 651; also Arthur, 1985: 6). In other words for Hegel the liberal doctrine upheld the individual right of political equality without adequately addressing the real source of inequality rooted in fundamental social relations; it subordinated state and civil interests to those of the egoistic private individual. As against this Hegel regarded the individual as a member of a wider community, a social being, obtaining his or her value through participation in the institutions of civil society (which embodies private interests and motives) which in turn are subsumed and transcended in the higher interests of the state.

For Hegel civil society (roughly coterminous with the 'state of nature' in the natural jurists) represented 'the realm of individuals who have left the unity of the family to enter into

interests not only achieve their complete development and gain explicit recognition for their right (as they do in the sphere of the family and civil society) but, for one thing, they also pass over of their own accord into the interest of the universal, and, for another thing, they know and will the universal [which they take] as their end and aim and are active in its pursuit' (Hegel,1981: 160).

In Hegel's view freedom thus designated the individual's ability, through a capacity for reasoning, to understand 'necessity'. The individual attains freedom in so far as he subordinates his subjective will or self-will to the general interests of the community embodied in the political state:

'As the highest form of the objectivization of Mind, the state represents the general will, and the freedom of the individual is a reality when it is based on obedience to the law, for then the will is obeying itself' (Kolakowski,1987 (1): 73)

Consequently the individual and his motives must firstly be 'absorbed and transmuted' (Sabine,1971: 651) in civil society's institutions, and then in those of the state (see Walton,1987: 127-8; Jessop,1984: 4). In the synthesis of private individual interests with those of the citizen (a notion reminiscent of the Ancient Greek view which equates the virtue the virtue of the individual with that of the citizen) the dualistic opposition between the egoistic individual and the communal citizen is abolished, thereby transcending the opposition between freedom and necessity:

'In contrast with the spheres of private rights and private welfare (the family and civil society), the state is... an external necessity and their higher authority; its nature is such that their laws and interests are subordinate to it and dependent on it. On the other hand, however, it is the end immanent within them, and its strength lies in the unity of its own universal end and aim with the particular interest of the individuals, in the fact that individuals have duties

to the state in proportion as they have rights against it' (Hegel, 1981: 161).

Underlying this dialectical synthesis is the view that man is a rational being and his will is therefore potentially informed by universal principles (see Arthur, 1985: 5-6; Bottomore, 1987: 199; Jessop, 1984: 4). As the state is representative of the general will obedience to its laws constitutes the attainment of freedom by the individual. Nevertheless the will of the state is not, as in the pluralistic view, identical with the collectivity of its citizens' individual wills - 'the general will is not the will of the majority but the will of historical Reason' (Kolakowski, 1987 (1): 74). Furthermore, Hegel did not propose that the distinction between civil society and the state be eliminated. Rather, he conceived of the state as the mediator of the differences and conflicts existing both within civil society as well as between civil society and the general will as embodied in the institutions of the state.

Therefore, although Hegel agreed with Locke, Rousseau and Adam Smith that the demise of feudalism and the absolute monarchy was marked by the emergence of the distinct spheres of civil society and the state, he rejected their view that the competitive and conflictual nature of civil society concealed an underlying unity and coherence, a reflection of the 'innate rationality in civil society which will lead to the general good' (Bottomore, 1987: 73). He did however consider civil society to be potentially unified and coherent, but maintained that it was the role of the state to realize and articulate this potential (Walton, 1987: 128; also Callinicos, 1987: 32).

As suggested above, Hegel also rejected the emphasis liberals placed on the primacy of the individual and his interests -- of the doctrine of individualism. The displacement of the individual as the central concern or focus of the state does not, however, imply that Hegel adopted a position of anti-constitutionalism

(see Hegel, 1981: 160-174), but rather of the pluralist conception of politics informing liberalism (Hegel's rejection of liberalism was nevertheless not unqualified, see below). For Hegel the state, which alone embodies ethical values, was both the end and highest value of human society (much as the polis was in Ancient Greece, and in particular in Plato's conception of it), the highest form of expression of man as a social being from which the individual derives his value. Hegel's anti-individualism and state-centric views thus constituted a direct challenge to Anglo-French liberal pluralism and signified a major shift in Continental European conceptions of the state.

The basic shift from a pluralist to an ultimately unitarian conception of politics and the state had far-reaching consequences for Hegel's more specific political theory. Thus the elevation of the efficient administration of the state to a high priority (a concern Hegel shared with Plato) was a natural consequence of the dialectical and unitarian conception of human society in which the state represented a higher expression of the social relations circumscribing individual existence. Hegel (like Plato) also envisaged the creation of a 'governing class' or 'universal class', a 'class of civil servants' (Hegel, 1981: 131) determined on merit and enjoying a distinct position of authority in a hierarchally structured political system (Sassoon, 1987: 135; also Sabine, 1971: 662). This ruling elite would function in a detached and impartial manner in its mediation of private and social interests (Jessop, 1984: 4, 5), whilst the bureaucratic organization would constitute the nexus between the governing class in general and the higher institutions of the state (McLellan, 1987: 13; Sabine, 1971: 662). In other words the class of civil servants is 'the crucial link between the particularism of civil society and the universality of the state' (Avinieri, 1972: 158).

Hegel sought to ensure the orderly functioning of civil society by means of a judicial system geared to the protection of the economic sphere of civil society (especially with regard to the

rights of property and person). His theory of constitutional government was, at least in this respect, broadly in accordance with liberal conceptions (and in an even wider sense with that of Aristotle who emphasized the protection of individual property rights and free exchange, as essential to the fostering of a 'political' order). However, even though Hegel distinguished between legal authority and personal power, he did not acknowledge any relationship between the rule of law and democratic political processes. The question of 'legality' was recognized as an essential feature of the rational state: all men as equal before the law. Yet for Hegel legal equality did not extend to the realm of law-making. Hegel's philosophical system quite explicitly sought to build on and extend 18th Century philosophical enquiry, focusing on the historical study of economic systems, social groups, nations, and national cultures and institutions. Hegel replaced the idea of natural law, dominant amongst Enlightenment thinkers, with a universal conception of history underscored by the dialectical method of study serving as a scientific instrument of social investigation. The dialectical process in history (above all in his Phenomenology of Spirit) is the process of the removal of the world's alienness and objectivity by means of the Mind's assimilating or preserving negation of the created universe - history conceived as the progressive and phased development of consciousness (see Hegel, 1981: 34-35). The Anglo-French pluralistic conception of politics as an independent or autonomous activity of individuals in pursuit of their particular interests, of the 'good life', was not entirely compromised by Hegel's view of politics as a reflection of 'social forces, of rivalries between nations or antagonisms between economic classes' (Sabine, 1971: 666-7). However the displacement of the individual by the 'social group', 'economic class', state and nation as the determining forces in the historical process, was indicative of the decline in influence of the 'classical' (i.e. pluralistic) Anglo-French conception of politics on the Continent. And this development laid the foundation for the emergence of various systems of associated radical political thought, the most notable of which was

that of Karl Marx.

1.4.2 Marx's Critique Of Hegel's Conceptions Of The State And Politics

In section 1.4.1 Hegel's concepts of the individual, civil society, the state and politics were considered for the purpose, in this section, of describing their profound influence on Marx's own political concepts. The first part of this section consists of a general description of the manner in which Marx applied Hegel's 'dialectical method' in his own view of history, 'stripped' of Hegel's idealism. This will be followed by an account of Marx's critique of Hegel's concept of the state with particular reference to Marx's uncompleted manuscript Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right' (1843).

Marx, especially towards the conclusion of the early phase of his thought, categorically rejected Hegel's idealism and his idealization of the state. Marx described these as "mystifications" that infected the dialectic because of the metaphysical idealism by which the system was vitiated' (Sabine, 1971: 667). Marx nevertheless adopted Hegel's dialectical method applying it to 'a material rather than a spiritual reality' (Lacey, 1986: 133) substituting for Hegel's 'World Spirit' the forces of production (i.e. the powers available to society in material production: see Chapter 2). In other words material values and economic considerations were viewed as the 'cause and the proper end of human, and especially social, action' (Lacey, 1986: 133; see Kolakowski, 1987 (1): 58-59). In The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844) (representing 'Marx's first draft of his "Economics"' (McLellan, 1988: 75)) Marx devoted the final section to a Critique of Hegel's Dialectic and General Philosophy, constituting 'probably his fullest account of his view of Hegel's dialectic, praising him for having discovered man's world-creating capacities, but criticizing his abstract philosophical portrayal' (McLellan, 1988: 75). Hegel, noted Marx, does 'indeed conceive of labour as the self-confirming essence of

man' however 'the only labour that Hegel knows and recognizes is abstract, mental labour' (Marx in McLellan, 1987: 153). Hegel's conception of history is thus properly dialectical in that it portrays the phased historical development or evolution of human civilization in terms of the preserving or assimilating negation of the manifoldness of Being, however it is unacceptably idealistic in the sense that this historical process is perceived as the unfolding of the 'Spirit' or 'Mind' (depriving objective reality of its objectivity). In the Grundrisse (1857-8) Marx would later refer to Hegel's idealization of history in the following terms:

'Hegel fell into the error... of considering the real as the result of self-coordinating, self-absorbed, and spontaneously operating thought, while the method of advancing from the abstract to the concrete is but the way of thinking by which the concrete is grasped and is reproduced in our mind as concrete. It is by no means, however, the process which itself generates the concrete' (Marx, 1857: 352)

Marx's critique of Hegel's idealist dialectic in the Manuscripts provided 'the general framework of the Marxian dialectic' (McLellan, 1987: 153). However Marx's adoption of Hegel's dialectic 'stripped of its mystified form' (Marx in Bottomore, 1987: 123) and the coupling of it to a 'materialistic conception of history' should not simply be equated with what later became known as 'dialectical materialism', i.e. with

'dialectical materialism in the tradition started by the later Engels. For Engels such a materialist dialectic was basic and could be summarised in the "laws" of the negation of the negation, the interpenetration of opposites, and the transformation of quality into quantity... In Marx any dialectical perception of nature was subordinate to the dialectic of historical praxis, the dialectic between man and nature' (McLellan, 1987: 152).

In other words Marx conceived of the basic form of the dialectic not as a mechanical determinism but as a historical process involving a 'material interchange between man and nature'

(McLellan, 1987: 154). Our focus in this section, however, is not primarily on the question of the nature of the dialectic in Marx as much as it is on the formative influence of Hegel's unitary conception of the state and politics on the young Marx. For this purpose we may best turn to one of his early works in which that formative influence can best be studied.

Marx's critique of Hegel's idealism in the Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right' (1843), certainly counts as one of Marx's more difficult works. At the time of its writing Marx's thought was undergoing a complex and fruitful transition which would, a few years hence, find expression in the original formulations of The German Ideology. Most of the seminal themes of the 1843 Critique reverberate throughout Marx's subsequent writing. Of Marx's broader criticism of Hegel's idealism it is his critique of Hegel's conception of the state (its origin, composition and function) which most concerns us here. Marx criticized Hegel for founding his conception of the state upon abstract ideas, and of portraying the elements of the state, the 'family unit' and 'civil society', as manifestations of the 'Spirit', and not, as Marx insisted, as material manifestations of men or individuals as they exist empirically:

'the fact is that the state originates in the mass as it exists as members of the family and civil society; speculation expresses this fact... as an act of a subjective idea, distinct from the fact itself... the fact that served as a beginning is not conceived of as such but as a mystical result' (Marx, 1843: 27).

The fundamental notion that Marx is asserting here is that the political relation between men is a social one, and that the state, both in form and function, is an expression of these social relations. It is idealist speculation that imparts empirical and social reality with a meaning other than its own. And the source of this error in Hegel's philosophy is, according to Marx, to be sought in Hegel's transformation of the true subjects of history, i.e. human individuals, into 'predicates of a universal

substance' (Kolakowski,1987 (1): 123). Man is not, as Hegel would have it, the subjective aspect of the state. On the contrary, the state is the creation of man and has no independent value outside of its function as an instrument serving the needs of empirical individuals, men in their real social existence.

Marx introduced the concept of 'democracy' (a concept which at this stage of his intellectual development was strongly influenced by Feuerbach's radical humanism) to illustrate the distinction between his concept of the state and that of Hegel. Marx described democracy as 'starting from man and makes the state into objectified man', whereas Hegel 'makes man into the subjective aspect of the state' (Marx,1843: 28). In other words, for Marx the aim of democracy is the restoration of control of the state to all its people, 'to make the state once more an instrument of man, i.e. to dealienate political institutions' (Kolakowski,1987 (1): 124), and hence restore the people's capacity for 'self-determination' (Marx,1843: 28). However achieving this goal is not possible as long as there remain distinct or particular spheres in (bourgeois) society, as divided into, on the one hand, the political state in which man's universal species essence (see 1.4.3 below) finds expression and, on the other hand, the realm of man's real existence in his private capacity as an individual member of civil society. Marx described this dualistic relation in the liberal bourgeois state as one of 'abstraction' or alienation. The individual member of civil society also stands as citizen in a relation to the state which becomes increasingly alienated and merely formal:

'... the particular spheres did not realize... that their private essence coincides with the other-worldly essence of ... the political state, and that its other-worldly being is nothing but the affirmation of their own alienation. ...

The abstraction of the state as such belongs only to the modern time, because the abstraction of private life also belongs only to modern times' (Marx,1843: 29, 30).

Marx therefore disagreed both with the particularistic liberal

conception of the state as well as Hegel's view that the general will is the will of historical Reason.

Underlying Marx's view of the alienating force of the modern state, of the state's abstraction from real man, was an interpretation of feudalism and the French Revolution which, in a number of important respects, he shared with Hegel. Marx, like Hegel, viewed society in the Middle Ages as divided into or composed of feudal 'societies' known as 'guilds' or 'estates', each of which had a political role:

'in the Middle Ages property, trade, society, and men were political; the material content of the state was delimited by its form; each private sphere had a political character or was a political sphere or politics formed the character of the private sphere... the people's life and the state's life were identical' (Marx, 1843: 30; see Marx, 1857 (2): 154-156).

In other words as the 'articulation of the civil community coincided with the political division' (Kolakowski, 1987 (1): 125), much as in the organic city-state of Ancient Greece, separate civil and political realms did not exist. (As we will see in section 2.1, Marx expanded on this theme in On the Jewish Question). With the demise of the feudal order, culminating in bourgeois political revolution, the political significance of the estates was abolished and a public division between civil and political life emerged. As a consequence of this the individual's existence in post-feudal society became 'dualistic', i.e. as both an individual 'private' member of civil society and as citizen of the state.

In agreement with Hegel Marx described civil society in its liberal conception and form as the arena of egoism and self-interest, 'the site of crass materialism, of the modern property relations, of the struggle of each against all' (Bottomore, 1987: 73). However, unlike Hegel Marx did not consider the political state capable either of regulating its relation with civil

society or of mediating between the particularistic relations of competition and conflict within civil society. Marx's rejection of the state as mediator of civil society extends to his rejection of Hegel's idea of officialdom or the bureaucracy as the detached and impartial organization of functionaries regulating private and social interests and thus effecting a 'synthesis between the common good and that of particular sections or corporations' (Kolakowski, 1987 (1): 124). On the contrary

'"bureaucracy" is the "state formalism" of civil society. It is the "state's consciousness", the "state's will", the "state's power"... and thus a particular, closed society within the state... Bureaucracy must thus safeguard the imaginary universality of the [political state]' (Marx, 1843: 30).

Furthermore, the

'aims of the state are transformed into the aims of the bureaux and the aims of the bureaux into the aims of the state. Bureaucracy is a circle from which no one can escape' (Marx, 1843: 31).

From this we can conclude that Marx considered as illusory Hegel's notion of the bureaucracy as somehow establishing a mutually beneficial functional bond between the interests and needs of the individuals in civil society on the one hand, and the imperatives of the state on the other. Ultimately the bureaucracy serves neither the interests of the individual nor of the species but its own, i.e. it constitutes a state within a state.

Marx thus posed the problem of the relation between civil society and the state differently than Hegel. For him it was not a question of how the state can best optimize its regulative capacity in relation to civil society, but rather how to optimize the capacity of real individuals in 'actual' civil society to regulate the political state. In the 1843 Critique Marx argued that this may be achieved by 'the extension and greatest possible universalization of voting, of active as well as passive

\suffrage...' (Marx,1843: 34). However, he came to see that somewhat ironically, unrestricted suffrage transforms civil society itself into an 'abstraction', the full achievement of which is 'at once also the transcendence of the abstraction' rendering its distinction from political existence 'inessential':

'Within the abstract political state the reform of voting advances the dissolution of this political state, but also the dissolution of civil society' (Marx,1843: 35).

In other words the universal extension of suffrage proposed by Marx would eliminate the gulf between private individuals and their relations and material interests in civil society on the one hand, and the political state and its political institutions on the other, by subjecting the state to the regulative control of its citizens and their interests in civil society. However to fully politicise and democratise society would be to abolish the specific function of the state as the sphere or arena of politics proper, of autonomous political activity, both in the liberal as well as the Hegelian conceptions (although in Hegel's case the state is understood dialectically, as the absorption and transcendence of civil society, and is in that somewhat restricted sense unitarian).

Implicit in the 1843 Critique, it can be argued, there is thus a unitary concept of politics as pertaining to the activity within and of the political state and political institutions. This is a 'narrow' definition in the sense that politics is viewed as the domain of state activity and intervention:

'In all states that are not democracies, the state, the law, the constitution is the dominant factor without really dominating, i.e. materially penetrating all the other spheres that are not political' (Marx,1843: 29).

However, as was seen above, Marx proposed a definition of democracy that would not only restore the control of the political state to the 'people', but which would lead to the demise of the political state itself, and hence, presumably, of politics narrowly understood as the activity and function of the state.

The question therefore arises as to what, if any, (positive) concept of politics Marx is in actual fact proposing. It could be that in suggesting that the split between civil society and the political state be abolished by means of universal suffrage Marx is proposing some form of radical democratic humanism in which politics as activity in the political state is transformed into a universal domain open to all members of society. On the other hand, as we have seen, in the 1843 Critique Marx also clearly equated the institution of universal suffrage with the consequence of the demise of the political state itself. Clearly therefore Marx rejected the liberal concept of politics in terms of participation through representation as he unequivocally rejected the split between civil society and the political state, also proposed in a qualified dialectical sense in Hegel.

There is another possible interpretation of Marx's concepts of the state and politics in the 1843 Critique, one which is adopted in Chapter 2 as the basis for our discussion of Marx's emergent, if to a great extent implicit, concepts of the state and politics. It was noted above that Marx considered political relations between individuals as basically social, and that the form of the state is an expression of these social relations. In the liberal conception of society the duality of civil society and the state is essential in the sense that civil society is the necessary arena of free initiative, i.e. of the unhindered interaction and exchange between individuals and their interests. The existence and justification of the state is therefore conditional upon the division between civil society and the state, with the latter supposedly regulating the free exchange in civil society. In other words, pluralism in the liberal sense is impossible without the existence of civil society distinct from the state. According to Marx's view, it follows that in the liberal conception of society in which individual relations are conflictual the political state does not, indeed cannot, function in the interests of the 'people', i.e. it cannot function as a 'proper' or 'true' state, since its form is an expression of society's con-

flictual relations. Much the same holds true for Marx's interpretation of Hegel's conception of the state, which whilst not 'democratic' in the liberal sense is nevertheless also conceived of as (dialectically) distinct from civil society. For Marx the origin of the dual nature of modern society must be sought in the empirical study of the social relations of individuals which determine the nature and form of the state, and the latter's relation to civil society, and not in the individual's relation to the political state.

This arguably penetrates to the heart of the opposition between pluralistic and unitary conceptions of politics, with the former, generally speaking, emphasizing the individual's independent value in relation to the state of which he is a member, and the latter proposing an 'organic' conception of the state in which the individual's value relates to his membership of that state. Marx's concepts of the state and politics, however implicit, may therefore be said to be unitary in the sense that his focus is the nature of social relations of the state, and not the relation of the individual to the state.

Marx did not propose a positive conception of politics or the state in the 1843 Critique. In fact his conception was clearly negative in as far as Marx envisaged the dissolution of the political state. Furthermore, it remained for him to give content to his notion of man as a 'social being' (see 1.4.3 below) and to draw explicit conclusions from this for his conception of the state and politics. However as Callinicos puts it:

'The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right marks a major step towards historical materialism by locating the source of alienation in the structure of society rather than the state of man's consciousness. There is, however, little consideration of class-relations, and Marx's politics remain those of "democratic extremism" rather than communism' (Callinicos, 1987: 34).

The extent to which he achieved this in his subsequent early

works, culminating in the German Ideology, constitutes the subject matter of Chapter 2, which in addition seeks to explore the question of 'monism' in Marx's conception of the state and politics. However before we continue with an account of Marx's early political writing we will firstly examine the general influence of Ludwig Feuerbach's materialism and radical humanism on the young Marx.

1.4.3 Feuerbach And Marx

Marx's writings of the period of 1843-5 were strongly influenced, apart from Hegel, by the ideas of Ludwig Feuerbach whose 'critique of Hegel... set Marx on the road to a more materialistic and revolutionary communism' (Callinicos, 1987: 33). In a very real sense, therefore, Feuerbach's thought represented a bridge between Hegel's 'absolute' or 'objective' idealism (and dialectical method), and Marx's (dialectical) materialism.

A former student of Hegel, Feuerbach rejected Hegelian idealism early in his development, adopting a materialistic position in his critique of German philosophical idealism, and especially of Hegelian 'speculative idealism' (McLellan, 1988: 131). Although the ideas expressed in his later writings were in simple Enlightenment terms, that in itself was a 'novelty in German philosophy, dominated as it was by the categories of Kant and Hegel...' (Kolakowski, 1987 (1): 118; also Vincent, 1987: 153). For Marx the general importance of Feuerbach's break with the tradition of German idealism lay in his substantial contribution towards the transformation of the 'Young Hegelian camp by radicalizing its anti-religious orientation' (Kolakowski, 1987 (1): 118), directly influencing Marx's rejection of Hegelian categories. Furthermore the concepts of the 'species-being' and 'alienation' which Feuerbach employed in his critique of Hegel's idealism were, as we shall see below, of particular importance to the development of Marx's early thought, and especially of Marx's rejection of Hegel's idealistic conception of the state.

Feuerbach rejected Hegel's idea of Spirit as the necessary development of consciousness in (historical) phases

'from pure consciousness to absolute knowledge by way of self-awareness, Reason, Spirit (or Mind), and religion, and in that knowledge [fulfilling] the purpose of the world, which is identical with knowledge of the world' (Kolakowski, 1987 (1): 58).

In other words Feuerbach rejected Hegel's idealist notion of 'Spirit' depending for its being on nothing but itself, absolute, infinite; and every form of reality, of Being, intelligible only as a phase of the evolution of the Mind or Spirit as not only the first principle but also the only reality - the Absolute. Feuerbach's

'radical critique of Hegel amounted to a reversion to the philosophical materialism of the French Enlightenment, to Diderot, Holbach, and La Mettrie' (Callinicos, 1987: 28).

A key to Feuerbach's critique of Hegel was his concept of the species-being which denoted a conception of man characterized by consciousness of a universal 'human essence', the same in himself as in other men -- a naturalistic conception rooted in Feuerbach's radical anthropocentric humanism. In basic terms Feuerbach argued that human nature has certain permanent features ('essences') which provide the basis or foundation for establishing 'happiness, solidarity, equality, and freedom' (Kolakowski, 1987 (1): 119) amongst an harmonious community of men. Feuerbach argued that religion subverts attempts to achieve human solidarity by depriving the human individual of his faculty of independent reason (i.e. his ability to conceive of himself in rational terms or categories). In Feuerbach's view religion

'inverts the relationship between subject and predicates, giving human predicates -- in the shape of the Deity -- the primacy over what is real, human, and concrete. Religion is a self-dichotomy of man, his reason, and feelings, the transference of his intellectual and affective qualities on to an imaginary divine being which asserts its own independence and begins to tyrannize over its creator'

(Kolakowski, 1987 (1): 115; see Callinicos, 1987: 28-29).

In other words for Feuerbach

'the evolution of the human consciousness led to the creation by the imagination of an alien being to whom all man's essential powers were attributed' (Callinicos, 1987: 29).

As a consequence of this process, which he termed religious self-alienation (a manifestation of mankind's objectified human essence or nature), neither the individual nor man in his social relations with other men can be free until religion, the source of conflict and servitude in man's social relations, yields to a rational world view.

Feuerbach's concept of the species-being is thus informed by a conception of the individual as consciously distinct from other individuals, yet linked by consciousness of a common and naturally determined human 'essence' comprising permanent and natural human features:

'Feuerbach thus preserved a Hegelian conception of history as the evolution of forms of consciousness; man's self-estrangement in religion is a necessary prelude to the establishment of the unity of subject and object. However, this unity is that of man and nature, not of the Idea and its empirical manifestations [as in Hegel's philosophy]. It is man who is the culmination of history, his species-being fully developed, rendered explicit as consciousness of his humanity, and of his roots in nature' (Callinicos, 1987: 37-38).

Feuerbach's assertion that the 'opposition between God and man is a "mystified" version of the opposition between the species and the individual' (Kolakowski, 1987 (1): 115) therefore embodied more than a rejection of the alienating force of religion, the most extreme form of human 'impoverishment'. Implicit in Feuerbach's critique of religion is an affirmation of a rational world view rooted in the 'Enlightenment stereotype of "natural egoism"' (Kolakowski, 1987 (1): 117), an attempt to formulate a radically anthropocentric universal humanism or 'materialist

humanism' which, as Callinicos says, had a 'profound impact on the more radical of the young Hegelians, notably Marx, Hess, and Engels', to whom it seemed to imply 'that man's alienation could only be abolished in a communist society' (Callinicos, 1987: 32).

In the Preface to the Manuscripts, Marx acknowledged Feuerbach's contribution, describing it as follows:

'The first positive humanist and naturalist criticism dates from Feuerbach [who's works are] the only one's since Hegel's Phenomenology and Logic to contain a real theoretical revolution' (Marx, 1844 (2): 76).

Furthermore, in a letter composed during the period in which the Manuscripts of 1844 was taking form, Marx attributed to Feuerbach the provision of

'a philosophical basis to socialism', continuing that 'the communists, too, have similarly understood these works [Feuerbach's Philosophy of the Future and Essence of Faith] in that sense. The unity of man with man based on the real difference between men, the concept of human society transferred from the heaven of abstraction to the real earth, what is this other than the concept of society!' (Marx, 1844 (3): 113).

However whilst acknowledging Feuerbach's richly suggestive theory of religious self-alienation (of the realisation of the individual's innate capacity for co-operation conditional upon the dealientation of human society), Marx regarded religion as a 'manifestation, not a root, of social servitude' (Kolakowski, 1987 (1): 127). Transforming the 'merely' anti-religious criticism of the humanists into a critique of the condition requiring illusion, Marx argued that man is not an abstract being, man 'is the world of man, the state, society' (Marx, 1844: 63). Consequently for individuals the 'demand to give up the illusions about their condition is a demand to give up a condition that requires illusion' (emphasis added) (Marx, 1844: 64). Therefore although religious suffering is real enough, for Marx it is an expression of and protest against real suffering, the source of

which is to be sought elsewhere. Taking over the concept of species-being, Marx imparted it with a distinctly 'social' bias, arguing that mankind's common or universal consciousness is rooted in the social nature of individuals and not in some abstract 'essence':

'Man becomes individualised only through the process of history. Originally he is a species-being, a tribal being, a herd animal -- though by no means a zoon politikon in the political sense' (Marx, 1857 (2): 165).

The unifying potential inherent in mankind's common social consciousness can only be realized, Marx argued, if individuals act in accordance with their nature as social beings, recognizing themselves as members of a universal community of men. Marx's view of the source of all manifestations of unsocial human relations was, as suggested above, also related to Feuerbach's concept of alienation (the key element of his humanistic critique of speculative metaphysics) which constituted an important impetus for Marx's redefinition of 'alienation' in terms of and rooted in the labour process (Arthur, 1985: 4), that is

'the self-alienation of man produced by the dialectical antagonism between wealth and the proletariat' (Marx, 1845 (2): 156-8).

This conception of human self-alienation was, as we shall see below, to become a cornerstone of Marx's materialist conception of history. And it is in this context that Marx concluded that Feuerbach had failed to expound the profound political and theoretical implications contained in his critique of idealism and religion, which Marx attempted to undertake in his 'early political writing' (see 2.1). In these early works, however, Marx came to reject all previous materialism (including both Feuerbach's and 18th Century French materialism) as 'mechanical' or 'static' materialism (Marx, 1845: 149-155, Marx, 1845 (2): 156; see McLellan, 1987: 136). This complex transformation is discernable in Marx's Manuscripts (see 2.1), in The Holy Family (1845) (described by Marx himself as a work of 'real humanism', McLellan, 1988: 131), concisely formulated in his Theses on Feuer-

bach (1845) (Marx, 1845 (2): 156-8), and forged into a more systematic form in The German Ideology (1846) (see 2.2) to form the basis of the 'materialist conception of history' or 'historical materialism'.

The general importance to Marx of Hegel's dialectical conception of society and Feuerbach's 'mechanical' materialism was emphasised by Antonio Gramsci in his Prison Notebooks, and especially in his notes on the 'problems of Marxism'. It would be inappropriate to introduce Gramsci's substantive argument at this stage. However it is instructive to note the perspective Gramsci placed on their relation, perhaps best described in the following passage in which the importance of the dialectic for Marx's materialism is emphasised:

'Hegel, half-way between the French Revolution and the Restoration, gave dialectical form to the two moments of the life of thought, materialism and spiritualism, but his synthesis was "a man walking on his head". Hegel's successors destroyed this unity and there was a return to materialist systems on the one side and spiritualist on the other. The philosophy of praxis [Marxism], through its founder, relived all this experience of Hegelianism, Feuerbachianism and French materialism, in order to reconstruct the synthesis of dialectical unity, "the man walking on his feet" (Gramsci, 1986: 396).

In the following chapter we will provide an account of Marx's materialist conception of history against the background of the Hegelian and Feuerbachian influences on Marx's thought described in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

In Chapter 1 Hegel's concepts of the individual, civil society, the state and politics were considered for the purpose of a general discussion of their profound influence on Marx's political thought. For Hegel, it was the role of the modern state to control, regulate and order civil society, since the state is 'abstracted' from civil conflict rooted in antagonistic particular interests. The state in Hegel thus orders society whilst at the same time transcending society as an idealized collectivity; the state conceived as a rational and eternal a-historical entity constituted of more than just political institutions. It is an ideal state, establishing a harmonious dialectical relationship amongst the various elements of society. It is important to remember, however, that in Hegel's view of political interests (and hence the political state) transcending individual economic interests (and hence civil society), the former does not seek to 'replace' the latter.

In Marx's 'early' political writing (i.e. prior to the German Ideology) he agreed with Hegel that the transition from the feudal to post-feudal forms of society was a dialectical 'process'. With bourgeois political revolution came the demise of the feudal order heralding the division between civil and political life. This division manifested itself in the formation of the distinct spheres of civil society and the political state. As a consequence the life of the individual became one of duality, that is on the one hand as a 'private' member of civil society and on the other as citizen of the state (the significance of this division for Marx's conception of politics will be discussed below). The 'dualism' that arose both in the structure of bourgeois society as a whole, as well as in the relation of the individual to it, marked the emergence of modern political pluralism which for much of the Nineteenth Century asserted itself as the dominant political doctrine in Europe, especially in

the Anglo-French world.

Marx, like Hegel, described civil society in its liberal conception and form as the arena of egoism and self-interest, the site of crass materialism as well as modern property relations and human struggle (Jessop, 1984: 4; Bottomore, 1987: 73; see Marx, 1843 (2): 55-57). However, unlike Hegel Marx did not believe that the relations of competition and conflict in civil society could be mediated or regulated by the political state. Indeed it is in his conception of the political state, and of its relation to civil society, that Marx fundamentally differed with Hegel as well as bourgeois political theorists in the liberal tradition. This fundamental difference with many of its implications, the most important of which is the question of Marx's political 'monism', will serve as the main focus for section 2.1, and will be discussed in the context of certain of Marx's earlier works. This will in turn provide the basis for our discussion of historical materialism in section 2.2. Section 2.2 will be divided into two parts. Section 2.2.1 will be devoted to an account of some of the basic concepts of historical materialism. In section 2.2.2 we will outline the main features of the 'orthodox' Marxism of the Second and Third Internationals, focusing on the problems of 'determinism' and 'reductionism'. Section 2.2.2 will also serve as the basis for our discussion of Gramsci's radical critique of economism in subsequent chapters.

2.1 The 'Early' Marx

In the articles On the Jewish Question (1843) and the Introduction: Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (1844) Marx developed a number of the political themes which he also addressed in his 1843 Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (see 1.4.2). However in the two former works Marx achieved a greater degree of conceptual clarity and unity of reasoning especially, as we will see below, with regard to his emerging concepts of the state and politics. This section will accordingly start with a brief discussion of these two seminal works of the

young Marx.

In the article On the Jewish Question Marx's concepts of species-being, individual man, the 'abstract' citizen, and political as opposed to human emancipation, rights and revolution, were more clearly and coherently articulated than in his 1843 Critique. In addition Marx explicated his notion of the relation between civil society and the state, from which evolved his understanding of the way in which 'real', i.e. human, emancipation is to be attained. Indeed it was the question of emancipation which emerged as the central theme of the article.

The article begins with Marx's assertion that the common consciousness underlying mankind's sense of communality is not recognised in the atomistic bourgeois conception of the individual (Marx, 1843 (2): 39-43). Marx went on to argue that the doctrine of individualism is inherently unable to satisfactorily address the problem of modern man's alienation in his social relations with other men. It was this view which underlay Marx's rejection of the liberal notion of 'political emancipation', as constituting the final form of human emancipation.

More specifically, Marx argued that political emancipation, brought about by bourgeois political revolution transformed state affairs (restricted in feudal society to the authority of the ruler and his servants) into general or public affairs concerning all citizens. However, although Marx considered the destruction of the feudal order to be a genuine achievement of bourgeois political revolution, he regarded the political equality accorded the individual, in terms of 'inalienable political rights', to be merely 'formal'. For, as he argued,

'a state can liberate itself from a limitation without man himself being truly free of it and the state can be a free state without man himself being a free man' (Marx, 1843 (2): 44).

In other words Marx rejected the liberal bourgeois notion that

there is a necessary correlation between political emancipation and the establishment of substantive equality and freedom for individuals. In bourgeois society the real differences between individuals in their socio-economic relations in civil society (e.g. of birth, class, education, race, profession, etc.) are treated as inessential with respect to the individual's standing as a citizen, i.e. to the individual's participation in popular sovereignty (Marx, 1843 (2): 45, 55-56). However, for Marx the abolition of the significance of socio-economic differences in political society does not do away with the fact that the existence of the political state presupposes these differences in civil society (see Marx, 1843 (2): 45), and this political equality may in fact reinforce unequal social relations by glossing over their true significance for the individual's political standing in society, thereby rendering political equality merely formal. The formation of the bourgeois political state and the disjuncture between the state and civil society therefore results in the individual leading a dual existence:

'a life... in the political community, where he is valued as a communal being, and in civil society, where he is active as a private individual, treat[ing] other men as means...' (Marx, 1843 (2): 46).

In other words, the formation of the bourgeois political state as distinct from civil society results in the individual living a dual existence, i.e. on the one hand as a citizen of the abstract political state and, on the other hand, as a self-interested member of civil society. Consequently in civil society where man

'counts for himself and others as a real individual, he is an illusory phenomenon. In the state, on the other hand, where man counts as a species-being, he is an imaginary participant in an imaginary sovereignty, he is robbed of his real life and filled with an unreal universality' (Marx, 1843 (2): 46).

Therefore whilst Marx subscribed to the goal of an emancipated universal community of men, he regarded the universality of the bourgeois political state and the communality of its citizens as

idealized constructs, 'a fiction of constitutions' (Arthur, 1985: 11). And since for Marx bourgeois political emancipation was not the final form of emancipation, the task of complete 'human' emancipation remained unfinished, and could only be realized when the emancipation of the state is accompanied by the abolition of the relations of conflict, inequality, domination and oppression between concrete individuals in their actual lives as members of civil society, thereby yielding social equality and justice (Marx, 1843 (2): 41ff, 55f etc.).

An important element in Marx's critique of the liberal programme for political emancipation was his interpretation of bourgeois 'human' rights. Rights were constituted, on the one hand, of the citizen's formal political right of participation in state affairs and, on the other, of the universal rights of man, i.e. the 'so-called' natural and imprescriptible rights of equality, liberty, property and security (Marx, 1843 (2): 51). Marx argued that in the bourgeois conception of human rights the 'unpolitical' (i.e. egoistic, self-interested) individual of civil society appears, quite ironically, to be 'a natural object... true man' (Marx, 1843 (2): 56) and his rights as natural rights. This was because in bourgeois society political action is self-conscious whilst the action of the egoistic individual is spontaneous and thus appears to be natural. Consequently in the bourgeois conception communal man, the citizen, is 'only the abstract fictional man, man as an allegorical or moral person' (Marx, 1843 (2): 56). This, Marx argued, is not a true reflection of the social nature of man, man the social-being:

'This man as he actually is, is only recognized in the form of the egoistic individual and the true man only in the form of the abstract citizen' (Marx, 1843 (2): 56).

For Marx it was paradoxical that a revolutionary class (the bourgeoisie), which had shattered feudal relations to form a political community (the state), should proclaim 'the justification of egoistic man separated from his fellow men and community' (Marx, 1843 (2): 54). In Marx's view the political emancipators

thus degraded citizenship, the political community, 'to a mere means for the preservation of the so-called rights of man', in effect declaring the citizen 'to be the servant of egoistic man, the sphere in which man behaves as a partial being'. As a consequence of all of this 'it is not man as a citizen but man as a bourgeois who is called the real and true man' (Marx, 1843 (2): 54; see also Gilbert, 1981: 5-6, 21-3, 89, 128). The enforcement of the 'bourgeois rights of man' by the state thus leads to the institutionalisation of their separation and disunity as well as entrenching social relations of domination and conflict in civil society.

For Marx the disjunction of the state and civil society produced a negative and inverse relation between them, i.e. the greater the concentration of politics and political activity in the political arena of the state the greater the materialism of relations in civil society (see Marx, 1843 (2): 56). The contradiction of the egoistic individual, with all his real attributes, as a member of unsocial civil society with the political state made up of citizens who enjoy merely abstract or formal (i.e. fictitious) universality, can therefore not be resolved by reform of the state only. In opposition to Hegel, therefore, who maintained that the state acts autonomously to order and regulate the unsocial relations in civil society, Marx regarded the state as an expression of the unsocial relations of a depoliticised civil society. Consequently not even the most democratic state is capable of forging civil society into a genuine community. The only way in which the state could transcend the contradiction of its abstraction from the real life of the individuals in civil society and so enforce the general will would be to abolish the distinction between itself and civil society:

'the State would have to absorb civil society and this, of course, would end its specific basis as an institution abstracted from civil life' (Arthur, 1985: 11).

Furthermore if the potential for unity inherent in mankind's common consciousness is to be realized the social nature of man must

serve as the organising principle of human society:

'man must recognize his own forces as social forces, organize them, and thus no longer separate social forces from himself in the form of political forces. Only when this has been achieved will human emancipation be completed' (Marx, 1843 (2): 57; see also Marx, 1844 (4): 124-7).

In this view, then, politics reflects man's alienation of his social nature from himself. Implicit is a narrow concept of politics as the activity pertaining to the structures and institutions of the political state or the governmental subsystem of society. Politics is identified, ultimately, with the struggle for state power. However, as we will show in section 2.2, Marx also went on to develop a rather different notion of politics in terms of the struggle of economically determined social classes, a view first expressed in The German Ideology (1846). Marx's call for human emancipation amounted to a negative pronouncement upon the narrow bourgeois concept of politics; on this view human emancipation would lead to the demise of the state, the arena of politics and government structures. For Marx the liberal programme for political emancipation was thus fatally flawed in so far as it remained within the prevailing social order. Emancipation, to be complete, must be extended to the 'revolutionary transformation of the economic and social order' (Miliband, 1988: 10; see also Held, 1987: 225-226).

In the 1844 Introduction to his Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (1843), first published in the Deutsch-Franzoesische Jahrbuecher, Marx crossed the threshold to revolutionary communism (Callinicos, 1987: 34, 35), introducing his conception of social revolution led by the proletarian class. In terms foreshadowing The German Ideology (1846), Marx argued that

'the basis of a partial, purely political revolution... is that a part of civil society emancipates itself and attains to universal domination, that a particular class undertakes the general emancipation of society from its particular situation. This class frees the whole of society, but only

under the presupposition that the whole of society is in the same situation as this class...' (Marx, 1844 (1): 71).

In order, therefore, that a general revolution and the emancipation of a particular class of civil society should coincide,

'the deficiency of all society must inversely be concentrated in another class... regarded as the notorious crime of the whole society, so that the liberation of this sphere appears as universal self-liberation' (emphasis added) (Marx, 1844 (1): 71).

In other words a particular class with particular interests (such as the bourgeoisie) may project itself as the representative of general social needs, thus claiming to represent all of society in its pursuit of emancipation. However such a putative revolutionary class is necessarily unable to establish universal human emancipation since it presupposes an equality of (human) means not yet in existence. The agency of actual universal emancipation must therefore be sought in a class

'in civil society that is not of civil society,... a social group that is the dissolution of all social groups... This dissolution of society, as a particular class, is the proletariat' (Marx, 1844: 72, 73).

Marx described the proletariat as a universal class due to its universal sufferings, its condition of propertylessness imposed by bourgeois society. The realization of the interests of the proletariat must thus imply the dissolution of the hitherto existing world order, for the universalization of the conditions of the proletariat (the realization of its demands) is the universalization of those principles which society has laid down for the proletariat.

Although the 1844 Introduction marked an important transition in Marx's thought, the concepts of 'class' and 'revolution' which were to become so central to his materialist conception of history, remained as yet ill-defined. Furthermore, although Marx now envisaged a central role for the proletariat in the revolutionary transformation of society, the proletariat was not yet

conceived as a determinate class formed within 'the specific relations of production which endow it with the capacity to create a classless society' (Callinicos, 1987: 35). Marx took a significant step towards integrating the key elements of his nascent world view in the 1844 Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts.

In the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 Marx linked his notion of the proletariat as the revolutionary agent of human emancipation with a discussion of alienated socio-economic class formation rooted in the relation of labour to property and capital in the labour-process of capitalist society. Though never completed and still betraying the considerable influence of Feuerbach's 'fundamental humanism' (see for example Marx, 1844 (2): 76, 97-8), the 1844 Manuscripts nevertheless marked an important transition in Marx's thought. It introduced a revolutionary new materialist notion of human nature, conceived not in terms of some abstract essence (as in Hegel's 'Absolute Idea' and Feuerbach's transcendent universal human nature) but rooted in the labour-process:

'Man's species-being consists, not in his self-consciousness, but in his objective relation to nature, the labour-process which provides the framework of man's interaction with his environment' (Callinicos, 1987: 38).

In the passage titled 'Alienated Labour', which is also the key organising concept of the 1844 Manuscripts, Marx asserted that he had been able to show that in bourgeois society the worker's degradation and misery stands in an inverse relation to

'the power and size of his production; that the necessary result of competition is the accumulation of capital... and that finally... the whole of society must fall apart into the two classes of the property owners and the propertyless workers' (Marx, 1844 (2): 77).

The worker stands in an alienated relation to his own production. Labour's product, the object that labour produces, confronts its

producer as alien, as an independent and 'solidified' object. In consequence the worker eventually falls under the domination of the product of his own labour. Consequently if the product of labour is alienated from the producer, the entire productive activity itself, man's 'vital activity', must be an alienating activity:

'So if the product of labour is externalization, production itself must be active externalization, the externalization of activity, the activity of externalization... It is self-alienation, as above it was the alienation of the object (Marx, 1844 (2): 80, 81).

The alienating effect of labour thus goes beyond merely alienating nature from man and man from himself. It also alienates

'the species from man; it turns his species-life into a means towards his individual life' (Marx, 1844 (2): 82).

This alienation from his species is expressed in an 'unsocial' or alienated consciousness, species-life becoming a 'means' for individual life and serving the interests of the individual (just as the abstract universal community of the bourgeois political state is a means to an end for the egoistic individual of civil society). Thus

'only under communism, where alienated labour and its expression in private property are abolished, will human beings be able to enjoy a fulfilled life' (Callinicos, 1987: 40; see Marx, 1844 (2): 83).

Moreover, the worker's 'unfree', alienated relation to his own productive activity reflects the worker's domination and oppression by other men (see Marx, 1844 (2): 83-4), namely

'of the capitalist, or whatever else one wishes to call the master of the labour. Private property is thus the product, result, and necessary consequence of externalized labour' (emphases added) (Marx, 1844 (2): 84).

Alienation is hence no longer 'essentially a mental phenomenon, as in Feuerbach' (Callinicos, 1987: 40), but a product of capitalist relations of production and of the conflict between the capitalist class and labour class or proletariat. The

Manuscripts pointed

'toward a theory of history based on the analysis of the historically variable social and technical forms in which production is organized... the beginnings of an analysis of capitalism in terms of the social relations of production' (Callinicos, 1987: 43).

Marx's materialist conception of history referred to in this passage constitutes the basis of the entire Marxist tradition of political theory. For our purposes the particular significance of Marx's analysis of the human labour-process in the Manuscripts is that it provided a foundation for his as yet implicit or emerging concept of politics, that is politics associated with antagonistic class relations located in the economic and social relations of capitalist society within which the proletariat emerges as an active revolutionary force. Marx had by now arrived at the basis for a concept of politics which especially in his later writing came to assume a broad meaning: politics conceived as the struggle between classes permeating the economic and social spheres of society.

For the remainder of this chapter we will examine the main features of Marx's mature thought with particular reference to his analysis of capitalist society and his class-based concept of politics.

2.2 Marx's Materialist Conception Of History

As stated in the Introduction to this study, the discussion in Chapters 3 and 4 of the sense in which Gramsci reevaluated Marx's conceptions of the state and politics must proceed against their general background in Marx's materialist theory of history, also referred to as historical materialism. Section 2.2.1 sets out to construct such a broad outline of the main features of historical materialism, and especially of Marx's concepts of the state and politics, with reference to The German Ideology (1846). The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, The German Ideology contains the first and perhaps Marx's most systematic formulation of

historical materialism, subsequently elaborated in the Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848), The Poverty of Philosophy (1847), the 1859 Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, and the third volume of Capital (1864).

A second reason, and one which as we shall see is quite controversial, is that the conception of history expressed by Marx in The German Ideology is quite similar in its instrumentalist and reductionist concerns to that of the 1859 Preface which, of all of Marx's writings, had the most profound impact on Marxist 'orthodoxy' (see section 2.2.2). It is also relevant that Gramsci, who interestingly enough emphasized the 1859 Preface in his writing, was highly critical of this orthodoxy. Marx's view of human history and society in both these works lent itself to 'economic determinism' or a view of society's legal, political and ideological forms as fully determined by its economic structure or 'mode of production'. Since The German Ideology remained unpublished until 1932 it can hardly be cited as an influence on the 'economism' characteristic of early orthodox Marxism during the period of the Second and Third Internationals. However, it had a marked influence on the formulations of the 1859 Preface and as such may be regarded as a starting point for exploring the problems arising from the economism of this Marxist orthodoxy.

Section 2.2. will thus be structured as follows. In section 2.2.1 we will outline the main features of historical materialism highlighting the notion of the 'primacy' of the economic base in Marx's account of society, as well as Marx's class based notion of politics. This will be followed in section 2.2.2, by a selective review of some of the controversies it has given rise to, with special reference to the Marxist orthodoxy of the Second and Third Internationals.

2.2.1 Historical Materialism And The Class Based Theory Of Politics

Given the general absence in Marx of a systematic and fully

developed framework for the analysis of the state and politics, this section sets out to identify the main features of the latter concepts in the tradition of historical materialism according to which Marx conceived of human society metaphorically as the relationship between an economic base or structure and its legal, political and ideological superstructure.

The German Ideology opens with a general statement of Marx's view, underlying most of his earlier writing, that in all previous history 'men have constantly made up for themselves false conceptions... about what they are and what they ought to be' (Marx, 1846 (2): 37), i.e. conceptions based on idealistic interpretations of human history, 'the rule of thoughts' (Marx, 1846 (2): 37) and speculative philosophy. Marx argued that the first premiss of all human history is the existence of living human individuals and their struggle for survival by which they are bound to their material conditions. In other words, for Marx men must be able to ensure their biological survival before they are able to make history. Hence the fundamental condition of all history is the 'production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself' (Marx, 1846: 165). These material conditions involve also those produced by human activity. Furthermore, Marx argued, the satisfaction of the primary needs of men leads to the creation of new needs. And this production of new needs constitutes the first 'historical act' (Marx, 1846: 166).

Marx did not deny that consciousness distinguishes man from animal. However, he argued that in reality, i.e. in their concrete existence, men begin to distinguish themselves from animals 'as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence', and by so doing indirectly reproduce the conditions of their actual material life, 'a step which is conditioned by their physical organization' (emphasis added) (Marx, 1846: 160). The first fact to be established, therefore, is the physical organization of individuals in the production of their means of subsistence,

and their consequent relation to the rest of nature. In The German Ideology Marx argued quite generally that the way in which men produce their means of subsistence constitutes the mode of production, which is

'a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production' (Marx, 1846: 160-1).

This mode of production is constituted not only by the way in which individuals organise the production of their physical existence (in a 'technical' sense as the mode or manner of production of their material life) but also by the form or manner of their 'intercourse', a social relation, which constitutes the type of social formation (social system) necessary to the production of their physical existence and which is, in turn, dependent on the material conditions determining their production. In other words for Marx the physical organisation of individuals in the process of production determines the social relation of individuals in the production process; a certain mode of production, or industrial stage, is therefore always combined with a certain mode of cooperation, or social stage - itself a 'productive force' (Marx, 1846: 161).

In The German Ideology Marx argued that the degree to which the division of labour has developed or manifested itself within the dominant mode of production of a society is an indication of the extent to which the 'productive forces' (generally, the powers available to producers in the process of production, see below) of a society have developed (Marx, 1846: 161). And changes in the division of labour itself is promoted by the introduction of each qualitatively new productive force. Within society, furthermore, the process of the development of the division of labour results in 'the separation of industrial and commercial from agricultural

labour'; subsequently in the 'separation of commercial from industrial labour'; and simultaneously, through the division of labour within these distinct branches, in 'divisions among the individuals co-operating in definite kinds of labour' (Marx, 1846: 161) in the production process.

If the possibility of more than one mode of production existing within a society remains implicit in The German Ideology, in the 'Introduction' to the Grundrisse (1857), Marx unambiguously asserted that different modes of production may coexist or subsist in concrete societies at a specific juncture in their historical development, and most especially in bourgeois society which is

'the most developed and most highly differentiated historical organization of production... [based] on the organization and the relationships of production which have prevailed under all the past forms of society, on the ruins and constituent elements of which it has arisen, and of which it still drags along some unsurmounted remains' (Marx, 1857: 355, see 356).

However Marx stated quite clearly that under

'all forms of society there is a certain industry [i.e. determinate kind of production or mode of production] which predominates over all the rest and whose condition therefore determines the rank and influence of all the rest... that appears in it' (Marx, 1857: 356).

This notion of economic primacy is also implicitly stated in a passage from Capital III, in which Marx discusses the general origin of the state in the economic base:

'This does not prevent the same economic basis -- the same from the standpoint of its main conditions -- due to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural environment, racial relations, external historical influences, etc., from showing infinite variations and gradations in appearance, which can be ascertained only by analysis of the empirically given circumstances' (emphasis added) (Marx, 1984: 791-2)

Although the constituent parts of the mode of production are not clearly articulated in The German Ideology, in Marx's later works, and especially in Capital, he quite explicitly stated that within each mode of production there is a relation of correspondence between forces and relations of production (Marx,1986: 36). However before we discuss this relation we must firstly define Marx's concepts of the forces and relations of production. The account of historical materialism as first articulated in the German Ideology requires more specific analysis of the concept forces of production as this was standardised in 'orthodox' Marxism. A systematic account of orthodox Marxism will, however, only be provided in section 2.2.2.

Marx's concept of the production forces can basically be divided into two elements, the means of production and labour power. The means of production or 'material' forces of production are constituted on the one hand of raw materials generally referred to as the 'objects' of production, and on the other of the 'instruments' of production such as tools, machines, factories, as well as 'infrastructural elements' such as roads, canals, etc. (Bottomore,1987: 207, see 267). In Capital Marx describes the means of production as 'the instruments of labour, the raw material, and the auxiliary substances consumed [in the process of production]' (Marx,1983: 531). Marx describes labour power or the capacity for labour as the

aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description' (Marx,1983: 164).

Labour power is thus constituted of 'the skills, [techniques], knowledge, experience, and other human faculties used in work' (Bottomore,1987: 207, see 178; Marx,1983: 164). The means of production and labour power combine in the labour process to produce use values which involves the alteration in the object of work effected by labour, labour materialised or objectified.

McLennan argues that for orthodox Marxists, such as Georgi Plekhanov and in recent years G.A. Cohen, the 'material character' of the production forces is emphasised (McLennan, 1989: 60-63). In other words on his view orthodox Marxists tend to draw a clear distinction between production forces conceived in material terms, and social relations of production. This orthodox position is, however, controversial and it has been contested within the Marxist tradition as well as in the study of Marx himself. As McLennan, for example, argues Marx on many occasions wrote

'of the "social forces of production", "productive power", and the like, with no apparent desire clearly to separate technologies and knowledge from social relations. Above all, this is true of the various forms of human co-operation in the labour process' (McLennan, 1989: 62; see also 2.2.2).

In McLennan's view Marx not only frequently referred to the form or mode of 'cooperation' existing between individuals involved in the production process (i.e. work relations) as a productive force, but frequently described the latter as the principal productive force (see McLennan, 1989: 62-3). An example of this is a passage from the Grundrisse in which Marx discussed the 'tribal' mode of production which, he argued,

'is as much the relationship of the individuals to one another as it is their specific active relationship towards inorganic nature, a specific mode of working... The community itself appears as the first great force of production; particular conditions of production... give rise to particular modes of production and particular forces of production, both subjective ones, i.e. those which appear as qualities of the individuals, and objective ones' (Marx, 1857 (2): 164).

In the light of the terminological difficulties which occur in Marx's earlier works McLennan, amongst others, questions the strict or narrow conceptual formulations characteristic of orthodox Marxism (McLennan, 1989: 62-63). Callinicos goes so far as to say that Marx's early account of his theory of history is plagued by a fundamental conflation of technical and social

relations. Callinicos argues, for example, that in The German Ideology Marx confused elements of the production forces with a 'promiscuously' inclusive notion of social relations (Callinicos, 1987: 49-51). However for Callinicos the 'mode of cooperation' itself, properly understood, 'presents no serious difficulty' for Marx's concept of production forces. On the contrary it is one of two constituent elements of the production forces (Produktionsweise):

'The first is what the classical economists called the "production powers" of man, the productivity of labour permitted by the existing level of development of technique. Secondly, Marx argued, in line with his stress on the social nature of production, that the technical organization of the labour-process requires a certain "mode of cooperation" among the producers. This arises from the specific technological imperatives of production, irrespective of the nature of the prevailing social relations' (Callinicos, 1987: 48-49).

This brief discussion of Marx's concept of production forces as well as certain aspects of its later interpretation is intended as an introductory outline of this key but controversial concept for the general discussion of historical materialism. The concept will, however, be discussed further in section 2.2.2. Suffice it here to make the general point that for our purposes the production forces can, broadly speaking, be said to represent the powers available to society in material production (Bottomore, 1987: 207).

Similar problems to those connected with the concept of forces of production arise in relation to the key concept of relations of production. In somewhat general terms Marx's concept of the relations of production has been described as the link between 'productive forces and human beings in the process of production' (Bottomore, 1987: 207) or the 'relationships between people into which they enter for the purpose of the production, exchange and

distribution of goods' (Kernig,1973: 35), relationships which form 'the foundation of social life' (Kolakowski,1989 (1): 337) and constitute what Marx referred to as the economic base of society. Herein lies its crucial importance for Marx's historical materialism: the relations of production constitute the link between the forces of production and society's legal, political and ideological spheres in the superstructure. In other words, for Marx (by some accounts) the developing forces of production determine the relations of production and they themselves determine the superstructure. This view, which is termed 'technological determinism', is quite unambiguously expressed in certain of Marx's texts, e.g. in the 1859 Preface, and it formed the basis of the orthodox Marxist economism of the Second International (see 2.2.2). However, like so many other of Marx's key concepts the relations of production has been subject to differing interpretations and remains the source of a great deal of controversy, in no small part due to its inconsistent meaning in Marx.

A fairly standard definition of the production relations provided by Bottomore holds that the concept is constituted of two 'types' of relations. On the one hand there are those pertaining to 'technical relations necessary for the actual production process to proceed', and on the other of 'relations of economic control... that govern access to the forces and products of production', which manifest themselves legally as 'property ownership' or social property relations. In this view the distinction between the two types of production relations is between the 'material work relations and their socioeconomic integument' (Bottomore,1987: 207). It may well be noted that from the above discussion of Marx's concept of production forces as involving a conflation of technical and social relations Bottomore's inclusion of 'material work relations' in the production relations is not an uncontroversial position. Nonetheless for our purpose here of providing a general description of the production relations there is no need to enter into the polemic on the issue.

Both Bottomore and Callinicos distinguish between 'economic' control and 'legal' ownership of the production forces. This is an important, and widely accepted, distinction since the formal legal right of ownership (legal title) over forces of production does not necessarily mean effective economic control over them. For, as Marx argued in the Grundrisse,

'in so far as property is only a conscious relation to the conditions of production as one's own... it is realised only through production. Real appropriation does not occur through the establishment of a notional relationship to these conditions, but takes place in the active, real relationship to them, when they are really posited as the conditions of man's subjective activity' (Marx, 1857 (2): 162).

Kernig describes the 'conditions' of ownership of the means of production as the crucial factor in, or basis for, classifying the 'various formations of production relations... which have existed in history' (Kernig, 1973: 35). In The German Ideology Marx outlined four major modes of production in terms of different epochs characterised by distinct relationships of the economic ownership of the direct producers to the 'material, instrument, and product of labour' (Marx, 1846: 161). The first form Marx described as tribal ownership, 'confined to a further extension of the natural division of labour existing in the family' (Marx, 1846: 161-2), in which the division between the labour-power of the direct producers on the one hand, and the means of production on the other, had not yet arisen. In other words tribal ownership relations were communal in nature and precluded private ownership of the means of production. Marx described the second form as ancient communal and state ownership which corresponded to the emergence of private property as yet, however, 'as an abnormal form subordinate to communal ownership' and in which 'the class relation between citizens and slaves is... completely developed' (the concept of class in Marx will be discussed below) (Marx, 1846: 162). In slave society the owners of

the means of production also own the labour-power (the slaves), i.e. they own and control society's production forces as a whole. As Marx argued in the Grundrisse, in slave society

'labour itself,... in the form of the slave... is placed along with the other natural beings such as cattle as an in-organic condition of production, as an appendage of the soil' (Marx, 1857 (2): 160).

In the third form, feudal or estate ownership, society was divided by the antagonistic relation of the feudal lords or nobility to the enserfed small peasantry. Later this latter division was extended to a social conflict between country and towns. And the towns were organized along the lines of corporative property, i.e. 'the labour of the individual with small capital commanding the labour of journeymen' (Marx, 1846: 163). In Marx's view the direct producers in feudal society had some limited degree of control both over the means of production as well as their own labour-power. Finally, Marx regarded modern bourgeois or capitalist relations of ownership as the most complex of the various historical forms of ownership. He argued that in bourgeois society a strong division arises between the direct producers, i.e. the workers or proletariat, and the owners of the means of production, i.e. the capitalist class. The proletarianised workers are denied independent access to the means of production and possess only their labour-power which they are compelled to sell to the owners of the means of production, the capitalist class, in order to survive (Callinicos, 1987: 50). To put it differently, although the individual wage-labourer in capitalist society is not legally forced to sell its labour-power to the capitalist class, the workers in effect have no access to the means of production other than by entering the capitalist production process. For the labourer or worker,

'on quitting the process, is what he was on entering it, a source of wealth, but devoid of all means of making that wealth his own' (Marx, 1983: 535).

Callinicos argues that the production relations in societies characterised by social class division (i.e. in ancient slave, feudal and capitalist societies) are 'therefore, in the first place, relations of exploitation' (Callinicos, 1987: 50; see also below). In other words a consequence of the private ownership of the means of production in class societies is that the property relations in these societies 'are characterised by subjugation and exploitation of the producers' (Kernig, 1973: 35). The production relations might therefore best be defined as 'the forms of possession of the means of production and the appropriation of surplus product' (McLennan, 1989: 60), where surplus product means the difference between the use-value of a direct producer's production and the distribution of income arising from that production. In class societies this difference is appropriated and accumulated in the form of unpaid surplus value by the owners of the means of production.

More specifically, in capitalist society the products of labour take the form of commodities which are produced for sale as values and are owned by the capitalist who

'obtains surplus value from the difference between the value of the product and the value of the capital involved in the production process, [and] the amount of surplus value a worker produces is the difference between the value he or she produces and the value of his or her labour power' (Bottomore, 1987: 472, 473).

The extraction of surplus value from the wage-labourer is thus the form of exploitation specific to the capitalist mode of production. In capitalist society the commodity involved in the production and exchange process appears as the union of its two constituent elements, namely its use value and its exchange value (Marx, 1983: 44). The former refers to its 'usefulness to some agent, which is what permits the commodity to enter into exchange at all' (Bottomore, 1987: 504). The property which determines the utility of a thing

'is independent of the amount of labour required to ap-

appropriate its useful qualities... [and] become a reality only by use or consumption' (Marx,1983: 44).

Exchange value refers to a commodity's 'power to command certain quantities of other commodities in exchange' (Bottomore,1987: 504). Marx argued that a commodity's exchange value is a variable,

'a relation constantly changing in time and place. Hence exchange-value appears to be something accidental and purely relative, and consequently an intrinsic value... [and is generally] only the mode of expression, the phenomenal form, of something contained in it, yet distinguishable from it' (Marx,1983: 44).

Marx argued that labour itself is composed of the same two-fold nature as the commodity (Marx,1983: 48) which is, furthermore, linked to the commodity. And the

'contradiction between use value and exchange value inherent in the commodity form, when it appears in labour power viewed as a commodity, is the source of the major social contradiction of capitalist production, the class division between workers and capitalists' (Bottomore,1987: 504).

From this account it will be clear that Marx's concept of production relations is directly linked to his concept of class which is, in a number of respects, central to historical materialism. Marx did not claim to have discovered classes:

'no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes... or the struggle between them... What I did that was new was to prove... that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production...' (Marx,1857: 341).

For Marx a class is defined not merely by a shared income status of a collectivity of members within a society or even by the source of the revenue identified with that collectivity but by its relation to the ownership of the means of production. Since all classes

'derive their revenue from the same source, namely the value

produced by the workers' labour, and since the way this value is distributed depends on who owns the means of production, it is the ownership that constitutes the ultimate criterion [of class distinction]' (Kolakowski 1,1987: 353).

The social collectivity to which individuals or agents belong is therefore determined, broadly speaking, with reference to their relationship to the productive process as a whole (Hunt,1984: 9). A factor common to the formation of all classes is exploitation which

'occurs when one section of the population produces a surplus whose use is controlled by another section' (Bottomore,1987: 157).

The relationship between classes 'turns upon the form of exploitation occurring in a given mode of production' (Bottomore,1987: 157). And it is the various forms of exploitation which are the source of the different forms of class antagonism and consequent conflict:

'Thus the different types of society, the classes within them, and the class conflict which provides the dynamic of any society can all be characterized by the specific way in which exploitation occurs' (Bottomore,1987: 157).

Marx did not assert that the structure of class societies is necessarily dualistic:

'The owners merely of labour-power, owners of capital, and land-owners, whose respective sources of income are wages, profit and ground-rent, in other words, wage-labourers, capitalists and land-owners, constitute then three big classes of modern society based upon the capitalist mode of production' (Marx,1984: 885).

However he did argue that by definition a class exists in relation to at least one other class, i.e. class societies are composed of at least two classes. In reality class societies may be constituted of numerous gradations and formations of classes to which, however, the polarised relation of possession and

dispossession, domination and dominated, exploiters and exploited, is fundamental (Marx, 1846: 169). This view is clearly formulated in the famous final and uncompleted chapter of Capital III in the context of Marx's analysis of class relations in capitalist society. Thus although Marx conceived a third major class in bourgeois society, i.e. the land owners, as well as 'intermediate' or 'transitional' classes (e.g. the petty bourgeoisie) and class 'fractions' (e.g. the small manufacturers, shopkeepers), Marx argued that in capitalist society class relations have an inherent tendency to develop towards a polar division.

Nonetheless Marx asserted that even in the case of England, which in his day was the most developed capitalist society in the world,

'the stratification of classes does not appear in its pure form. Middle and intermediate strata even here obliterate lines of demarcation everywhere... However, this is immaterial for our analysis. We have seen that the continual tendency and law of development of the capitalist mode of production is more and more to divorce the means of production from labour, and more and more to concentrate the scattered means of production into large groups, thereby transforming labour into wage-labour and the means of production into capital. And to this tendency [corresponds] the transformation of all landed property into the form of landed property corresponding to the capitalist mode of production' (Marx, 1984: 885).

Thus although Marx acknowledged the innumerable variations and gradations of class forms which may appear in historically actual societies (see for example: The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte), the general thrust of his class analysis was a two-class logic, i.e. the postulated tendency that social divisions in capitalist society lead to a duality of two principal classes engaged in struggle.

We are now in a position to describe Marx's concept of the mode of production with more specific reference to his concepts of the forces and relations of production, as well as the process of transition between different modes of production. In fact Marx provides just such a description in his Grundrisse, which is worth quoting at some length. Marx here argued that self-preservation is the object of all 'communities', i.e. the reproduction of the same 'objective mode of existence, which also constitutes the relationship of the members to each other, and therefore constitutes the community itself' (Marx's emphasis) (Marx, 1857 (2): 162-163). As this passage suggests, by reproduction Marx meant the continuation of existing production as well as the creation of the conditions for continuation of production (production in Marx cannot simply be reduced to material production but on a general level involved the reproduction of the social formation as well as of the economy):

'Whatever the form of the process of production in a society, it must be a continuous process... A society can no more cease to produce than it can cease to consume. When viewed, therefore, as a connected whole, and as flowing on with incessant renewal, every social process of production is, at the same time, a process of reproduction' (Marx, 1983: 531).

However this process of reproduction is inherently unstable since the dynamics of social reproduction dialectically contain forces which lead to the dissolution of the existing order in its transformation into a new mode of production. In other words the mode of existence of a society is based on its conditions of production and the relations corresponding to these, but

'this reproduction is at the same time necessarily new production and the destruction of the old form. For instance, where each individual is supposed to possess a certain amount of land [a material means of production], the increase in population already presents a problem... Thus the preservation of the old community implies the destruction of the conditions on which it rests, and turns into its

opposite. For instance, if it were to be argued that productivity could be increased within the same territory, through a development of the productive forces... the old economic conditions of the community would be transcended. In the act of reproduction itself are changed not only the objective conditions... but also the producers, who transform themselves in that they evolve new qualities from within themselves, develop through production new powers and new ideas, new modes of intercourse, new needs, and new speech...

In the final analysis the community, as well as the property based upon it, comes down to a certain stage in the development of the productive forces and the working subjects, to which correspond certain relations of these subjects to each other and to nature. Up to a certain point, reproduction. Then this turns into dissolution' (Marx, 1857 (2): 162-164)

In the above passage from the Grundrisse Marx argued that the dialectical relation between the developing productive forces and the existing production relations of a mode of production determines the nature of society. It follows from this that the form of the 'community', the '"history of humanity"', must always be studied and treated in relation to the history of industry and exchange' (Marx, 1846: 166). This basic tenet of historical materialism is already clearly enunciated in The German Ideology:

'the social structure and the State are continually evolving out of the life-process of definite individuals... as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions, and conditions independent of their will' (Marx, 1846: 164).

In addition to the material bases of the social and political structure in production, Marx argued, men are the producers of their own conceptions and ideas, whether these are of politics, law, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc.. Religion, culture and ideology are the products of 'men in their actual, empirically

perceptible process of development under definite conditions' (Marx, 1846: 164, 165, also 166, 167).

For Marx, therefore, society's economic structure stands in a relation of primacy to the legal, political and ideological forms which constitute its superstructure. In other words,

'the various spheres and realms of society reflect the dominant mode of production and... the general consciousness of an epoch is shaped by the nature of its production' (Bottomore, 1987: 208).

Marx thus did not regard human 'consciousness' as something 'inherent' or 'pure'; consciousness only arises from the necessity of interaction and exchange between humans and is, therefore, 'from the very beginning a social product' (Marx, 1846: 167), 'consciousness of existing practice' (Marx, 1846: 168). And the contradictions arising between the products of 'pure' consciousness and existing social and economic relations only do so 'because existing social relations have come into contradiction with existing forces of production...' (Marx, 1846: 168).

The focus of development in society is therefore not, as in Hegel, the process of the development of consciousness, but rather the inevitable contradictions within the structure of production. Human ideas and conceptions

'are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms' (Marx, 1846 (2): 47).

In this excerpt from The German Ideology Marx used the term 'forms of intercourse' which embraces social relations generally. Callinicos argues that this term should not be confused with the related yet more specific and less inclusive concept of production relations which, unlike the concept of the production forces, Marx first introduced in The Poverty of Philosophy (1847), i.e. after the German Ideology. In this view although Marx conceived production relations 'at the level of production... they do not, unlike the productive forces, consist in a specific technical organization of the labour-process'

(Callinicos, 1987: 49), i.e. they do not signify relations between individuals in the labour-process but instead they are social relations based on the antagonism of classes. Nonetheless Marx's essential point remains that social forms, the state and the manifestations of the consciousness arise from relations of production in society's economic structure.

This basic determination still allows for various qualifications. Thus according to Marx the determination of legal and political structure's by the economic structure

'will tend to be relatively direct, while its influence over other social realms, culture, and consciousness generally is more attenuated and nuanced' (Bottomore, 1987: 208).

Furthermore, Marx did allow for a certain degree of 'reciprocal influence' between 'spiritual production' and material production:

'In other words, the superstructure of ideas is not conceived as a mere passive reflection but is capable of some effectivity' (Bottomore, 1987: 43)

However the degree of reciprocal influence between the economic base and the ideological, as well as legal and political superstructure varied in Marx's accounts, and was in fact a question with which he wrestled throughout his life. Marx's own formulations vary in nature from being highly deterministic (see for example his 1859 Preface) to being quite complex and nuanced (see for example Capital III). Marx's inconclusiveness regarding the nature of the base-superstructure relation has given rise to what is perhaps the greatest controversy regarding his theory of history (see 2.2.2). Thus, for example, in the Marxist orthodoxy of the Second International the base-superstructure relationship was conceived in a highly deterministic or straightforwardly causal manner. And as we will see in Chapter 4, this conception was one of the main targets of Gramsci's strongly dialectical critique of Marxist orthodoxy.

A further issue in Marx of relevance to the Marxist orthodoxy of

the Second International were the shifts and inconsistencies in his conception of the main historically determined modes of production. Marxist orthodoxy laid great store by a conception of history as the preordained transition between successive modes of production (Callinicos, 1987: 68). As we will argue in section 2.2.2 this teleological view of history underlay the economism of Second International Marxism which became the main target of Second International revisionism led by Eduard Bernstein as well as a central concern of Gramsci's mature writing. The origins of both this later economism and revisionism can be found in the seminal accounts provided by Marx himself at different stages of his own work.

In the German Ideology Marx identified four modes of production, namely the tribal, ancient slave, feudal and bourgeois modes of production. These, Bottomore notes, were 'restricted to European history' (Bottomore, 1987: 458). In the 1859 Preface Marx asserted the existence of the same four historical modes of production, only now he referred to the first of these as the 'asiatic mode of production' (Marx, 1859: 390). Whether Marx intended these modes of production to be regarded as somehow representative of progressive or 'logically successive' historical stages or epochs in the economic formation of all societies, or whether he was primarily concerned to identify all modes of production which have existed historically without adhering to a narrowly conceived model of their progression, is a highly controversial issue in the history of Marxism. Bottomore argues that in The German Ideology references to historically existing modes of production portrayed them as each following 'the other in some logical pattern' (Bottomore, 1987: 458). This was certainly the view which became dominant in the orthodox Marxism of the Second International.

In the analyses of pre-capitalist modes of production found in the 1857 Grundrisse Marx seemed to acknowledge a far more complex historical development than he provided in either The German

Ideology or the Preface. In the Grundrisse Marx, for example, analysed the evolution of tribal existence as a progression from 'pastoralism, or more generally a nomadic way of life' to a 'settled' tribal community (Marx, 1857 (2): 149-150). In the Grundrisse Marx also treats 'Asiatic fundamental forms' (Marx, 1857 (2): 150) of the tribal mode of production as distinct from their European forms such as those found in 'the Slavonic and Romanian communities' (see, Marx, 1857 (2): 151). In these primitive tribal societies the form of the state was as yet a elementary and amorphous communal 'despotism' based on a primitive notion of unity rooted in communal property:

'the communality within the tribal body may appear either in such a way that its unity is represented in one head of the tribal kinship group, or else as a relationship between the heads of families. The former will produce a more despotic, the latter a more democratic form of this community' (Marx, 1857 (2): 151).

In the Grundrisse Marx moreover distinguished a second mode of production with the formation of organized slave societies which heralded the 'concentration of settlement in the city' (Marx, 1857 (2): 152). Marx argued that the very presence of the city distinguished 'it from a mere multiplicity of separate houses' as in the tribal community (Marx, 1857 (2): 154) giving rise to substantial local variations such as the early Jewish and ancient Greek and Roman communities (see Marx, 1857 (2): 153). In slave societies a distinction between communal property and private property evolves as a basic form:

'Communal property -- as State property, ager publicus -- is here separate from private property. The property of the individual is here not itself direct communal property, as in our first case... To be a member of the community remains the precondition for the appropriation of land, but as a member of the community the individual is a private proprietor... But this belonging is mediated through his being a member of the State, through the existence of the

State -- i.e. through a presupposition which is regarded as divine, etc.' (Marx, 1857 (2): 152-153).

The existence of private property is thus still conditional upon the owner's membership of the community. Private property is thus a subordinate form of ownership.

In the Grundrisse Marx also identified a third mode of production with the 'Germanic commune' by which he meant feudal society of the Middle Ages:

'Here it is not the case, as in the specifically oriental form, that the member of the community is as such co-holder of the communal property. The Germanic form also differs from the Roman, Greek (in short, the ancient classical) form, where land is occupied by the community... and where the remainder is distributed' (Marx, 1857 (2): 154).

Marx argued that the Germanic feudal commune, unlike ancient society, was not concentrated in the city. On the contrary it appeared as a form of loose 'assembly' as opposed to an 'association',

'a unification whose independent subjects are the landed proprietors... the community therefore does not exist as a State, as a State system... For the community to come into real existence, the free landed proprietors must hold an assembly... the ager publicus does not, as among e.g. the Romans, embody the specific economic being of the State... [but] is rather a mere supplement to individual property... the property of the individual is not mediated through the community' (Marx 1857 (2): 154-155).

Thus the community in feudal society is constituted of the unmediated relations of individuals one to the other and not 'as an entity endowed with an existence of its own' (Marx, 1857 (2): 156).

Of Marx's various writings on historically existing modes of production it was his account of the bourgeois or capitalist mode of production which was the most complete, and the most

important. The extensive nature of Marx's analysis of capitalism is not simply ascribable to its dominance in contemporary Europe. Marx argued that capitalism is unique in history since it establishes the potential for negating global poverty and exploitation by realising a level of production which establishes the objective means for satisfying the demands of all individuals in society. Under capitalism production becomes at least in principle truly universal, a unique historical achievement. However under capitalism this potential is not realized since what is rightfully social wealth is appropriated by private individuals. More specifically, Marx argued that the bourgeois or capitalist mode of production amounted to systematic alienation. In the tribal, ancient city-state and Germanic or feudal modes of production, the individual 'is subjectively presupposed as belonging to a community, through which his relationship to the land [the original instrument of labour] is mediated. His relation to the objective conditions of labour is mediated by his being as a member of a community' (Marx, 1857 (2): 157). In these modes of production man is the end of production, its purpose, and labour involves 'the absolute unfolding of man's creative abilities... the absolute movement of becoming' (Marx, 1857 (2): 159) and property 'means the relation of the working (producing) subject (or the subject reproducing himself) to the conditions of his production or reproduction as his own' (Marx, 1857 (2): 164). Marx argued that in the bourgeois mode of production, and its corresponding social relations, the basis of a unified relation of labour to the inorganic conditions of human exchange had ended:

'In the bourgeois economy -- and in the epoch of production to which it corresponds -- [the] complete unfolding of man's inner potentiality turns into his total emptying-out. His universal objectification becomes his total alienation' (Marx, 1857 (2): 159).

For Marx the bourgeois mode of production thus distinguishes itself from all other forms by

'the separation between [the] inorganic conditions of human

existence and [the] active being, a separation which is posited in its complete form only in the relationship between wage labour and capital' (Marx, 1857 (2): 160).

In bourgeois society 'the worker stands there purely subjectively, without object' (Marx, 1857 (2): 165), the worker is alienated both from the objective conditions of his own production and from other men. For Marx the codification or institutionalisation of private property in bourgeois society heralded the creation of a class of propertyless workers, the proletariat, which is the direct producer of private wealth.

This had significant implications for the nature and role of the state in capitalist society. Marx argued that the division between the community and individual interests which emerged in capitalist society took 'an independent form as the State', which was 'divorced' or abstracted from the objective interests of the individual and the community. The bourgeois state thus amounted to

'an illusory communal life, always based, however, on the real differences existing in [civil society]... and especially... on the classes... which in every such mass of men separate out, and of which one dominates all the others. It follows from this that all struggles within the state... are merely the illusory forms in which the real struggles of the different classes are fought out among one another' (Marx, 1846: 169).

As this passage suggests, for Marx the bourgeois state functioned at the behest of the dominant class which by controlling the means of production has attained its position of domination at the expense of the labouring classes. Consequently in Marx's view antagonistic class relations were the basis of politics, and the struggle of classes, in all its real and variagated forms, constituted the substance of politics. In other words, for Marx the conflict of these diverse and particularistic economically based classes not only underpinned social conflict in society, but also constituted a core aspect of his broad understanding of politics

as the

'pervasive and ubiquitous articulation of social conflict and particularly of class conflict, and enters into all social relations, however these may be designated' (Miliband, 1988: 6).

This is of considerable relevance and implications in view of our concern with the narrow or broad conception of politics. It indicates a shift from the narrow conception of politics and the state rejected by the young Marx as discussed above. Political power was no longer narrowly equated with state power, although for Marx the bourgeois state was perforce a coercive institution of political authority whereby the dominant class in society imposes and defends its interests against the exploited classes (Held, 1987: 225-226). The state in capitalist society thus appears to the dominated classes 'not as their own united power, but as an alien force existing outside them... independent of the will and the action of man...' (Marx, 1846: 170). Disparity between individuals in bourgeois society will remain as long as the bourgeois state defends the private ownership of the means of production and the class divisions which correspond to this form of ownership. The bourgeois state cannot therefore be reformed:

'The political superstructure as an apparatus of coercion cannot be reformed in such a way as to start serving the interests of the exploited class; it must be destroyed by revolutionary violence' (Kolakowski, 1987 (1): 360).

Still, the broader notion of politics implicit in Marx's basic account of class conflict provides a foundation for an alternative Marxist account of politics itself, one which Gramsci would later explore.

Against the background of our discussion of historical materialism and with a view to section 2.2.2 in which we will address the question of 'economism', we may now turn to Marx's 1859 Preface to A Critique of Political Economy which became a key text in the orthodox Marxism of the Second and Third Internationals. Marx described the 1859 Preface as a self-

assessment of his 'politico-economic studies' (Marx, 1859: 388). In this work Marx asserted that his analysis of the general relations pertaining to the economic structure of society (the 'material conditions of life', that is of 'civil society'), led him to formulate his materialist theory of history, the 'guiding thread' for his studies. And it is the 1859 Preface which contains perhaps the most famous as well as most controversial formulation of Marx's materialist theory of history in terms of the base-superstructure metaphor:

'In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political, and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production, or -- what is but a legal expression for the same thing -- with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From the forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundations the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed' (Marx, 1859: 389).

The Preface is generally regarded as an example of Marx's writing at its most authoritative. However it is also one of his most controversial formulations, lending itself towards a strongly deterministic interpretation of history in which the material

production forces are conceived of mechanistically as the motive force of historical change. In other words in the Preface the line of historical causation goes unambiguously from the developing material production forces to the relations of production which constitute the economic structure of society, and the latter is described as the determining basis of the legal and political superstructure to which corresponds forms of social consciousness. Furthermore Marx argued that the transition between epochs is brought about by the contradiction between developing production forces, the motive force of history, and existing relations of production. In other words the introduction of qualitatively new production forces results in the existing production relations, existing property relations, beginning to act as fetters on the development of the production forces. And the emergent contradiction between developing production forces and existing production relations is then resolved 'in favour of' the emergent production forces by a periodic process of social revolution which brings about new relations of production and hence also a new social, political and intellectual order. Therefore on the account of the Preface the origins of the social structure in its entirety, including the corresponding form of the state, is to be sought in the emergent contradiction between developing production forces and the existing relationship of the owners of the means of production to the direct producers of a prior mode of production. This contradiction between the forces and relations of production culminates in social revolution and the formation of higher relations of production which favour the further development of the production forces, a view also expressed in the Grundrisse:

'In the final analysis the community, as well as the property based upon it, comes down to a certain stage in the development of the productive forces of the working subjects, to which correspond certain relations of these subjects to each other and to nature' (Marx, 1857 (2): 164).

From the above description of historical materialism it can be

seen that Marx's understanding of human history and society is characteristically 'monistic' in that it:

'purports to enable us... to discern the fundamental structure of any society by analysing its relations of production and the class divisions based directly thereon' (Kolakowski, 1987 (1): 351).

In other words Marx proposed a conception of history which theorizes the determinate primacy of the mode of production and an analysis of politics rooted in the category of the conflict of economically based classes which derive their form from specific relations of production of a prevailing mode of production.

Historical materialism has been criticised for the 'determinism' which it operates between a society's economic base and political and ideological superstructure. Furthermore Marx's understanding of the state and politics, rooted in his analysis of political and social forces in terms of the struggle between economically based classes (with the category of class constituting the theoretical nexus between the concepts of the mode of production, the state and politics) has been criticised as unacceptably 'reductionist'. The questions of historical materialism's economic determinism and political reductionism are complex, especially in relation to Marx's prolific output. It is not, however, our main purpose to assess these issues from the point of view of Marx's own writing. Our immediate concern is, instead, to provide an account of economism in the orthodox Marxism of the Second and Third Internationals as the essential background for analysing Gramsci's revaluation of historical materialism.

We may now proceed with that account.

2.2.2 The Orthodox Marxism Of The Second And Third Internationals

The purpose of this section is to serve as a background for our analysis of Gramsci's radical critique of economism and his Marxist pluralism. Our discussion involves an overview of the leading figures in Marxist orthodoxy together with a brief summary of their most important theoretical contributions. To conclude the section some basic points of argument will be introduced concern-

ing the post World War II shift towards a generally more pluralist Marxist perspective. Although this latter part of the discussion cannot be directly related to Gramsci's much earlier, Pre-War, critique of economism and his pluralist political perspective, it nevertheless provides an interesting historical analogy to Gramsci's essential problematic and helps to focus on the central issues which Gramsci addressed in his own recasting of historical materialism.

In the years following Marx's death in 1883, historical materialism made the transition from his classical texts to the perhaps inevitable simplifications and vulgarisations of revolutionary politics. At first 'Marxism' remained the almost exclusive domain of the relatively sophisticated intellectual milieu of German social democracy. Yet ironically this, Continental Europe's most advanced industrialised society with a powerful and highly organised socialist movement became engulfed in ever growing waves of reaction. In the socialist movement this was paralleled by its leadership's gradual retreat from revolutionary politics and the Sozialistische Partei Deutschlands (SPD) thoroughgoing process of bureaucratisation. This was perhaps unavoidable for as Miliband tells us by 1914 the German Social Democratic movement had

'become a vast institution that was staffed by more than 4 000 paid functionaries and 11 000 salaried employees, had 20 000 000 marks invested in business and published over 4 000 periodicals' (Miliband, 1988: 121).

The Second International, which was based on the European labour movement and was dominated by German Social Democrats, was formed at an International Worker's Congress held in Paris in July 1889 (Bottomore, 1987: 235). Engels, who since Marx's death in 1883 enjoyed a privileged status as the pre-eminent interpreter of Marxism's classical texts (McLellan, 1986: 9), laid the theoretical foundation for the Second International with what is now known as 'dialectical materialism'. On this view human society is

governed by certain objective and scientifically ascertainable laws and 'proletarian revolution will be the outcome of an objective social process' (Callinicos,1987: 61). After Engels's death Karl Kautsky (1854-1938), Georgi Plekhanov (1856-1918) as well as Antonio Labriola (1843-1904) emerged as the most important theorists of the official Marxism of the Second International (Callinicos,1987: 62).

From its inception the Second International was dominated by German Social Democracy. At its Erfurt Congress in 1891 the increasingly powerful SPD adopted a 'simplified form of Marxism' as its official ideology (McLellan,1986: 23). The two most prominent Marxist intellectuals in the SPD were Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932) who were widely regarded as the direct successors of Marx and Engels (McLellan,1986: 25). However Kautsky was to become severely critical of Bernstein's 'revisionist' break with Marxist orthodoxy, which occurred soon after the death of Engels in 1895. The publication of Bernstein's Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgabe der Sozialdemokratie in 1899 led to a hardening of opposition to his revisionist views amongst the theoreticians of the Second International (McLellan,1986: 24). Bernstein regarded the Marxism of his day as overly determinist and criticised the orthodox tendency to make too sharp a distinction between base and superstructure. Yet, as McLellan argues, neither Kautsky nor Bernstein were dialectical thinkers. Bernstein was profoundly influenced by neo-Kantianism and Kautsky, even more so than Bernstein, by Darwinism:

'Kautsky was a Darwinian before he was a Marxist and remained one, to some extent, all his life, his conception of social evolution being always tied to that of natural evolution. Hence his excessive emphasis on production forces and objective necessity' (McLellan,1986: 36).

The vulgarised, evolutionist conception of the Hegelian dialectic which characterised Second International Marxism (Laclau and Mouffe,1989: 20; Callinicos,1987:65) contributed towards its economism which, as Mouffe argues, led directly to its theory of

the collapse of capitalism

'whereby the proletarian revolution was the necessary and inevitable consequence of the development of the economic contradictions of the capitalist mode of production' (Mouffe,1979 (2): 172-173; see Callinicos,1987: 63).

This deterministic position was particularly influential in the SPD and, paradoxically, became an argument for inaction as the conditions for revolution were never thought to be sufficiently developed for intervention' (McLellan,1986: 32; Callinicos,1987: 64-65). For his part the revisionist Bernstein argued that capitalism had

'shown itself to be sufficiently adaptable for there to be hope of its gradual transformation into socialism... which was seen as the more or less peaceful inheritor of a fully developed capitalism' (McLellan,1986: 30).

Bernstein's view of the evolutionary transformation of capitalism thus involved the rejection of Kautsky's notions of revolutionary politics and class struggle. Instead he argued that the gradual broadening and deepening of democracy would 'raise the worker out of the social position of a proletarian into that of a bourgeois' (Bernstein in McLellan,1986: 31). Callinicos argues that Bernstein's theoretical position amounted to nothing less than a repudiation of historical materialism and a 'reversion to "true" socialism' (Callinicos,1987: 65).

Plekhanov, like Kautsky, was severely critical of revisionism's political gradualism and was the first to work out a detailed critique of Bernstein's views (McLellan,1986: 68). However Plekhanov's most important contribution to Marxism was his role as the founding father of Russian Marxism. More particularly Plekhanov developed an orthodox Marxist perspective for a revolutionary movement in Russia (Kolakowski,1987 (1): 400; McLellan,1986: 68;) and until 1914 had a profound influence on Lenin's thought. Plekhanov championed a version of historical materialism which appealed

'directly to monism as the necessary basis for the marxist

theory of history. Monism, on this account, is the attempt to explain the totality of social life in terms of "one main principle" or motive force... [striving hard] to fend off the criticism that a monist understanding is equivalent to (economic) "single-factor determinism" (McLennan, 1989: 59, 60; see Laclau and Mouffe, 1989: 24).

In other words Plekhanov did not isolate a single historical factor and then assert the dependence of all others upon it (Kolakowski, 1987 ? : 341-342), for as McLennan says Plekhanov made a distinction between 'determinate wholistic explanation' and single-factor determinism (McLennan, 1989: 60). Unlike Kautsky, Plekhanov was never treated by Lenin as a complete renegade. This allowed his orthodoxy to contribute heavily to the Third International formed under Lenin's leadership (1919-1943). Furthermore, unlike Kautsky and Bernstein Plekhanov emphasised the particular contribution of Hegel to Marx's mature thought (Bottomore, 1987: 374-375). This may well, despite Lenin's own exclamations to the contrary, have contributed towards Lenin's emphasis on Hegel's dialectic after 1914:

'It is impossible completely to understand Marx's Capital... without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!!' (Lenin in McLellan, 1986: 108).

Nonetheless, the 'radicals' or revolutionary left wing of the Second International, Lenin (1870-1924), Luxemburg (1871-1919), and Trotsky (1879-1940), developed analyses of specific questions in a way which represented a philosophical and political break with the evolutionism underlying the thought of Kautsky and Plekhanov. The most distinctive dimension of these analyses involved a 'shift towards a version of Marxism which laid much greater stress on the role of consciousness and activity in the revolutionary process' (Callinicos, 1987: 67). The position of the radicals were strengthened with the disintegration of the Second International at the outbreak of World War I, and their 'break' with evolutionism culminated in the Bolshevik victory and the

formation of the Third International.

In the aftermath of the First World War the decision to found the Third International was taken at a March 1919 congress in Moscow under the leadership of the Bolsheviks of which Lenin and Trotsky were the two most important figures (Kolakowski, 1987 (3): 106, 108). Soon after its inception the founding fathers of the Third International made a formal break with the principles of Second International Marxism, and especially with its 'reformist' elements. The general optimism which accompanied the founding of the Third International, or 'Communist International' (Comintern) as it came to be known, was a direct result of the October Revolution of 1917 as well as the prospect of heightened revolutionary activity in Central Europe (especially in Poland, Germany and Austria). However within a few years the Comintern was confronted with the failure of socialist revolution in Central Europe (notably in Germany) as well as the growing question concerning the appropriateness of offensive (Leninist) revolutionary tactics in the context of the advanced capitalist states of the West (Bottomore, 1987: 236-237). With the failure of the German Revolution in 1923 the Comintern's drift towards the doctrine of 'Socialism in One Country' and thus complete Soviet domination was inevitable, a trend which was consolidated under Stalin's leadership.

Lenin's leadership of the Russian Revolution and the Communist Party ensured the dominance of his views in the early years of the Third International. Lenin's contribution to Marxist theory, although real in other areas, was most notable in the field of politics, both revolutionary as well as theoretical. The State and Revolution (1917), written on the eve of the Bolshevik victory, set out the strategy for the Bolshevik victory and responded in great detail to what Lenin regarded as the 'treason of the German Social Democrats (led by Karl Kautsky) in supporting Germany's entry into World War I' (Carnoy, 1984: 57; see

Polan,1984: 23, 24). It also contained the characteristic 'Marxist-Leninist' theory of the state and politics which was to become the standard for an entire generation of orthodox revolutionary Communists.

Lenin regarded the bourgeois state as essentially a coercive organ of class rule. He argued that although it intervenes to reconcile class conflict this was in fact impossible:

'According to Marx, the state could neither arise nor maintain itself if it were possible to reconcile classes... the state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another; it is the creation of "order" which legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between the classes' (Lenin in Carnoy,1984: 57).

Thus in Lenin's view the creation of the state presupposed class struggle and served the interests of society's dominant class (Polan,1984: 14). This instrumentalist view of the bourgeois state was the fundamental thesis of Lenin's political theory. And in this view the very dominance of the bourgeoisie by means of the state, which it controls directly, necessitates the state's violent revolutionary overthrow:

'The liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution, but also without the destruction of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class' (Lenin in Carnoy,1984: 57-58).

As Miliband argues, it was this

'"smashing" of the existing state which Lenin, following Marx, took as the first and absolutely essential task of a genuinely revolutionary movement and party' (Miliband,1988: 139).

Lenin proposed that bourgeois dictatorship through the state be replaced by the dictatorship of the working class over the capitalists and other reactionary forces. The 'dictatorship of the proletariat' would be a fundamentally different type of state, i.e. soviet democracy (Simon,1985: 17) which was a system of government based on direct workers' democracy. For our pur-

poses it is of particular importance to note the determinism which underlay Lenin's concept of the state. For him there was a directly causal, mechanistic relation between economics and politics, a view which Gramsci rejected.

Lenin accorded a special significance to the revolutionary party with respect to the initiation and leadership of a workers' revolution to overthrow the Russian state. Against the background of Czarist autocracy and mindful of attempts by reformist social democrats to co-opt proletarian and peasant leaders, Lenin formulated his views of the party as a 'vanguard' of the oppressed masses, emphasising its role as the promotor of a revolutionary working class consciousness. In Lenin's view the working class movement could not, spontaneously and without coherent leadership, develop that articulate class consciousness which was a prerequisite for a successful socialist revolution. In an early pamphlet What Is to be Done? (1902), Lenin's seminal work on the role of the revolutionary party, he argued that

'since there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves... our task, the task of Social-Democracy, is to combat spontaneity, to divert the working-class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie' (Lenin in McLellan, 1986: 87).

It is in such passages as these that Lenin emphasised the role of political consciousness for the mass revolutionary movement. Lenin stressed the need for creative leadership exercised by a revolutionary vanguard whose function it was to disseminate ideology, educate the workers and forge cohesion (Bocock, 1986: 26-27). This was the basis for Lenin's understanding of the notion of 'hegemony' involving the system of political alliances which the proletariat forms under its leadership in the process of democratic revolution (Bottomore, 1987: 201); a contribution to Marxist theory which Gramsci explicitly acknowledged and radically extended (Gramsci, 1986: 365; see Chapter 3). Lenin's proposals for the organisational basis of the revolution-

ary movement, which by no means went unopposed, amounted to a strategic split between the mass movement on the one hand, and a core of professional and dedicated revolutionaries on the other. He argued that

'in order to "serve" the mass movement we must have people who will devote themselves exclusively to Social-Democratic activities, and that such people must train themselves patiently and steadfastly to be professional revolutionaries' (Lenin in McLellan, 1986: 88).

Although in What Is to be Done? Lenin did not propose to 'divide' the masses off from the party elite, his notions of party 'secrecy, centralisation, specialisation, and exclusivity' (McLellan, 1986: 87; see Miliband, 1988: 142) contributed heavily to later trends in Soviet politics and Third International orthodoxy. This was a contentious issue, all the more so for Marxists who 'have a commitment to thorough political democratization and to what may be called the dis-alienation of politics' (Miliband, 1988: 126). It was however a trend which Stalin masterfully exploited, and it is therefore not surprising that he later 'canonised' What Is to be Done? (McLellan, 1986: 88).

The course of political developments following the revolution cannot, however, be explained with reference to Lenin's political writing. As Polan argues with particular reference to the State and Revolution:

'Such is the discrepancy between the argument of the text and the manner in which the Bolshevik regime actually developed that it appears to offer no access to an understanding of what happened. Here were a set of utopian ideals rapidly erased by the brute necessities of political life' (Polan, 1984: 15).

A specific example of this disjuncture between theory and unfolding reality can be illustrated with reference to Lenin's writing on the state. In his early writing Lenin had argued that the state after the revolution could not be envisaged as 'withering away' in the early stages of socialism's construction. Lenin had

argued that the state machinery must instead be utilised to 'expropriate the expropriators' (McLellan, 1986: 98). However, as we saw above in the State and Revolution Lenin transformed his analysis of the state arguing that the dominance of the proletariat after the revolution must be assured by destroying the old state machine and replacing it with the dictatorship of the proletariat:

'A Marxist is solely someone who extends the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is what constitutes the most profound distinction between the Marxist and the ordinary petty (as well as big) bourgeois. This is the touchstone on which the real understanding and recognition of Marxism is to be tested' (Lenin in McLellan, 1986: 99).

As McLellan tells us in the State and Revolution there is scant elaboration on matters of substance, i.e. regarding the shape of the proletarian dictatorship (McLellan, 1986: 99; also Liebman in Polan, 1984: 22). What is clear is that from 1917 onwards the radical centralisation of Russia's political system gained momentum and ideas of direct proletarian power dissolved. Instead what emerged was the dictatorship of the Party. Furthermore, a growing equivalence took hold between the Party and the state (McLellan, 1986: 100). Polan outlines Anweiler's view of these developments as follows:

'Lenin's infatuation with the soviets was a short-term, tactical position derived from the necessity to gain power. Previously, in 1905, he had been hostile to the soviets. He had been consistently suspicious of all attempts at proletarian, spontaneous self-organization, inasmuch as these were bound to conflict with his own party's right to lead. The change of attitude in 1917 was of a specific nature. Lenin's acceptance of the soviets only extended as far as their role in the revolutionary movement, and did not legitimize them as structures for revolutionary self-government' (Polan, 1984: 25).

In other words, on this view the general autocratic trend in the

organisation of Soviet society can be traced back to Lenin's conception of the party before and during the Bolshevik Revolution (see Claudin, 1979: 138). The notion of a workers' democracy was thus subverted by the Party of the workers itself.

The most vehement, and most telling, criticism of Lenin's 'conspiratorial vanguardist' idea of the party came from Luxemburg whose views are worth quoting in some length:

'Socialist democracy is not something which begins only in the promised land after the foundations of socialist economy are created; it does not come as some sort of Christmas present for the worthy people who, in the interim, have loyally supported a handful of socialist dictators... Yes, dictatorship! But this dictatorship consists in the manner of applying democracy, not in its elimination' (Luxemburg in Carnoy, 1984: 62).

Luxemburg tended to regard Lenin's views 'as a left-wing mirror of Bernstein: a sectarianism that separated the party from the masses in the same way as Bernstein separated the movement from its goal' (McLellan, 1986: 46). Although Luxemburg admired Lenin's initiative and praised his successful leadership of the October Revolution she had considerable reservations regarding the political trends in Lenin's post-revolutionary Russia:

'Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party... is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently. Not because of any fanatical conception of 'justice' but because all that is instructive, wholesome and purifying in political freedom depends on this essential charactersitic... Lenin is completely mistaken in the means he employs... The only way to rebirth is the school of public life itself, the most unlimited, the broadest democracy and public opinion. It is the rule by terror which demoralises' (Luxemburg in McLellan, 1986: 54).

Written in prison just prior to her murder, her words were to be given an exceptional resonance by the consequences of Stalinism.

And as we will see in subsequent chapters Luxemburg's views contain elements which Gramsci, for much the same reasons, regarded as fundamental to any sustainable and democratic transformation of bourgeois society.

Upon Lenin's death Stalin set about establishing his domination of the Soviet power structures. Polan eloquently describes the degenerative political effect of Stalinist rule over the Soviet Union. On this view a 'genuine politics' and Stalinism were, to say the least, contradictions in terms:

'In a peculiar irony on Engels' dictum, the 'government of people' had truly become the 'administration of things'. The absolute erasure of any public sphere consigned all ideology to redundancy or vacuity... Where no... plurality exists, public discourse is an absurd non-sense, a ghost without substance, without connection or role within the world of material corporeality' (Polan, 1984: 27).

Stalin's complete victory over real and supposed opposition had many repercussions for the Comintern. On a theoretical plane it led to the paralysis of original thinking about Marxist theory (McLellan, 1986: 137). On a political level the Comintern under Stalin made its most disastrous policy decisions. Firstly, Stalin forced a split in the Comintern culminating in Trotsky's expulsion in 1927. This was followed in 1928 with the official denunciation of social democracy as 'social fascism', and 'Social Democrats were regarded... even as greater enemies than the Fascists themselves' (McLellan, 1986: 132). To compound this extraordinarily naive move in 1931 the Comintern, by now reduced to little more than an organ of Stalin's personal dictatorship, equated bourgeois democracy per se with fascism (Bottomore, 1987: 237). The negative pronouncements on Western bourgeois democratic movements came on the eve of Nazi power and all that came to mean, especially for the Soviet Union. And as Kolakowski argues, the

'fact that the German Communists, who represented a powerful political force, turned their fire against the socialists

was a major cause of Hitler's accession to power' (Kolakowski,1987 (3): 111).

Furthermore, the Comintern sanctioned Stalin's 'Left Turn' and the purges of the late 1930s (McLellan,1986: 132-134). Ironically, many Comintern leaders were not to escape their own sanction:

'Stalinism was a regime which stamped out opposition in anticipation, and constantly struck at people who were perfectly willing to conform, on suspicion that they might eventually cease to be willing' (Miliband,1988: 145).

The 'cruder' variants of Marxist orthodoxy are generally referred to as 'technological determinism', 'simple economism' or 'mechanical determinism' and, as we have argued, Second and Third International Marxisms had certain general, though by no means consistent, features. There is, in broad terms, general agreement regarding these. Thus Callinicos argues that orthodox Marxism is 'a version of Marxism in which social change is an organic process whose outcome is determined in advance' (Callinicos,1987: 63), history conceived 'as a series of modes of production succeeding each other in a pre-ordained sequence in response to the level of development of the productive forces' (Callinicos,1987: 68). McLennan refers to orthodox Marxism as an historical teleology whose influence 'spans Second and Third International marxisms and their Soviet successors' (McLennan,1989: 60). In McLennan's view the most notable orthodox Marxist theoreticians held that in each historical mode of production it is the autonomous or inherent growth of the productive forces 'which account for the pivotal changes in social relationships' (McLennan,1989: 60, see 62, 63; also Laclau and Mouffe,1989: 24). The concept of the mode of production is therefore the 'core component' of the orthodox Marxist account of history. For on the one hand each epoch in history is defined by its dominant mode of production. And on the other hand, the orthodox account of Marxism sees revolution generally as the transition between modes of production, a transition determined by the inevitable contradic-

tion between developing forces of production and given production relations in the economic structure (Bottomore,1987: 335). Indeed, as Mouffe argues, this contradiction

'was considered to contain all the elements necessary to explain the historical process. As a consequence, political and ideological factors simply became epiphenomena' (Mouffe,1979 (2): 174).

In other words by assigning explanatory 'priority to one part of an evolving complex system whose parts are all to some extent interdependent' (Mepham and Ruben,1979: 143-4), orthodox Marxists reduced the superstructure to a mere expression of dominant economic relations. As a consequence of this economist position the state, as the core component of the superstructure, was treated as an epiphenomenal derivative of the economic relations of the structure, devoid of reciprocal effectivity - a passive reflection of developing production forces (Jessop,1984: 10; Callinicos,1983: 60). Partly as a consequence of this view the state did not become a general 'field of investigation and debate within Marxism' until the 1960s (Bottomore,1987: 464). In an incisive passage worth quoting in its entirety, Laclau and Mouffe provide a cogent summary of the negative implications which Marxist orthodoxy had for Marxism's ability to conceive the complexity of modern society. Thus, the orthodox paradigm reduced

'diverse subject positions... to manifestations of a single position; the plurality of differences is either reduced or rejected as contingent; the sense of the present is revealed through its location in an a priori succession of stages. It is precisely because the concrete is in this way reduced to the abstract, that history, society and social agents have, for orthodoxy, an essence which operates as their principle of unification. And as this essence is not immediately visible, it is necessary to distinguish between a surface or appearance of society and an underlying reality to which the ultimate sense of every concrete presence must necessarily be referred, whatever the level of complexity in the system of mediations' (Lacalu and Mouffe,1989: 21-22).

This passage suggests that the teleology and reductionism of Marxist orthodoxy have a strong tendency to abstract social relations and political processes from complex realities.

Still, there are other interpretations possible of Marx's historical materialism than the determinism of the orthodox position. Thus Kolakowski, who rejects technological determinism, argues that Marx distinguished between the determining primacy of the technological level in a specific society at a specific juncture in history and the broad category of an 'epoch' in which the 'material mode' or 'economic movement' asserts itself as necessary 'in the last resort':

'Marx's account of the dependence of the superstructure on the relations of production applies to great historical eras and fundamental changes in society. It is not claimed that the level of technology determines every detail of the social division of labour, and thus in turn every detail of political and intellectual life' (Kolakowski, 1987 (1): 339).

In this view Marx did not intend his theory of history to be understood as an explanatory schema for specific historical events (subject as they are to 'accidental' circumstances and social causation). The basic thrust of historical materialism is the postulated determinate primacy of the relations of production corresponding to a particular technological level, but this postulated primacy of the mode of material production does not preclude the influence of the various elements of the superstructure which all

'exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form' (Engels in Kolakowski, 1987 (1): 340).

In this way the form and action of the state, in particular, cannot be conceived as wholly determined - devoid of any autonomy of action or effectivity. Yet in the Marxist literature the controversy continues to rage with respect to the extent of the superstructural 'efficacy' and the reciprocity between base and superstructure. The thrust of the various critiques of economic

determinism, whilst retaining the central Marxist category of the determining mode of production, suggests some recognition of causal pluralism. However, the drift towards heterodoxy is fraught with problems. McLennan's commentary gets to the heart of the dilemma:

'few Marxists are willing to accept outright causal pluralism; otherwise the very concept of a determining mode of production would be pointless' (McLennan, 1989: 74).

Nonetheless if Marxists do not incorporate some notion of the 'contingency of social causation and the relatively autonomous impact of "non-economic" forces' (McLennan, 1989: 74),

the problems posed by the determining mode of production continue to generate the suspicion of fundamental explanatory deficiencies and contradictions in Marx's conception of history.

In subsequent chapters we will discuss the way in which Gramsci's reconstruction of historical materialism, based on his radical critique of economism, contributed towards a viable pluralist alternative to the 'overdetermination' of orthodox Marxism whilst retaining a distinctively Marxist perspective.

CHAPTER 3

CIVIL SOCIETY, THE STATE AND HEGEMONY IN GRAMSCI

The primary purpose of this chapter is to explore the meaning Gramsci attached to his concepts of hegemony and of the integral state. We will highlight In the course of the discussion of Gramsci's concept of hegemony it will become clear that it is linked to Gramsci's reconceptualisation of the Marxist notions of the base and superstructure. This in turn will serve as the background to the discussion in Chapter 4 of Gramsci's revaluation of Marx's conception of the base-superstructure relation in which Gramsci's concept of hegemony becomes the key concept in understanding the very unity which exists in a concrete social formation (Laclau and Mouffe, 1989: 7).

The concept of hegemony is widely regarded as the key 'organizing' concept of Gramsci's mature writing, collected in English translation in the Selected Prison Notebooks. Indeed, as Laclau and Mouffe argue, the concept of hegemony in Gramsci, as against that found in Lenin, 'acquires a new type of centrality that transcends its tactical and strategic uses' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1989: 7). As we will see Gramsci's concept of hegemony is tied into a range of other concepts and insights of his theory of politics, a comprehensive discussion of which is neither intended nor possible here. Instead we will provide a systematic discussion of the Gramscian concept of hegemony which, as will be argued, has two distinct yet interrelated meanings (see sections 3.1 and 3.2. respectively). This approach to Gramsci's concept of hegemony is consistent with the general conclusions, if sometimes quite implicitly, of the more recent literature on the subject (see for example, Adamson, 1980; Mouffe, 1979; Sassoon, 1987; Morera, 1990; Carnoy, 1984).

As already indicated two distinct yet interrelated meanings can be distinguished with respect to Gramsci's concept of hegemony. In its one sense Gramsci utilized the concept of hegemony to

describe the process whereby a (subordinate or 'subaltern') class or group conscious only of its narrow economic existence and interests also develops a consciousness of its political and cultural identity and significance, thereby positioning itself as a class of potential national predominance not only in the political sphere but also in the moral and intellectual spheres of national life. For Gramsci the process of struggle towards this predominance, of achieving this 'hegemony', involves the articulation of the emerging social class or group's interests with those of allied classes and other social groups in order to form a broadly based collective will as the basis for political domination. Section 3.1 will be concerned with an account of this first meaning of hegemony, and will include a review of Gramsci's concepts of economic-corporate consciousness (see section 3.1), the intellectuals and the political party (section 3.1.1).

Section 3.2. will be devoted to the second sense of hegemony in Gramsci, more specifically to an analysis of the relation between Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and the 'integral state'. This second dimension to Gramsci's concept of hegemony involves the dialectical relation Gramsci posed between the functions of 'political society' and 'civil society' (both original concepts with a new meaning in Gramsci), which together constitute his concept of the integral state. On this view the function of the state is essentially one of 'domination', 'force', or 'coercion' (see section 3.2.2), while civil society is the sphere of 'leadership' or 'consent' and 'consensus formation' - the arena of hegemony (see section 3.2.4). This section will also include an analysis of Gramsci's concepts of the 'passive revolution' (see section 3.2.1), 'war of position' and 'war of manoeuvre' (see section 3.2.3), indicating their interrelation in Gramsci's thought.

3.1 Economic-Corporate Consciousness And Hegemony

The first meaning of hegemony in Gramsci, then, is related to the transition of a social class from a 'subaltern' or subordinate to

a predominant position in society. This struggle for predominance involves the transformation of a class's economic-corporate consciousness (i.e. its consciousness of shared economic interests and similar economic position in society) into a fully fledged political consciousness. This involves a struggle which is largely fought on the terrain of competing ideologies in the political arena which Gramsci accorded a certain degree of autonomy in his reconstruction of historical materialism (see Chapter 4). In Gramsci's view an emerging class in society utilises ideology to help forge an organisational basis for economic, political, as well as moral and intellectual unity across a wide spectrum of social classes and groups under its leadership. And it is on this basis of consensus building amongst potential class allies that an emerging class seeks to establish its predominance in the political life of a society. For Gramsci a social class or group's predominance no longer consists solely of a simple political alliance but of a complete fusion of economic, political, intellectual and moral objectives which will be brought about by one fundamental group and groups allied to it through the intermediary of ideology (Mouffe, 1979 (2): 181).

Gramsci distinguished three phases ('levels' or 'moments') in the development of collective political or class consciousness according, in his own words, to the 'degree of homogeneity, self-awareness, and organisation attained by the various classes' (Gramsci, 1986: 181; see Sassoon, 1987: 117). The first such 'level' corresponds to what Gramsci termed 'economic-corporate' consciousness, i.e. members of a

'professional group [who] are conscious of its unity and homogeneity, and of the need to organise it, but in the case of the wider social group [to which they belong] this is not yet so' (Gramsci, 1986: 181).

For Gramsci such economic-corporate consciousness thus constitutes a 'primitive' form of consciousness not extending beyond awareness of the immediate interests of the professional group or

economic category to which the individual belongs. It therefore does not serve to unite members of the same social class but only to articulate professional groups or associations identified within a potentially unified social class. A second level in the development of collective political consciousness

'is that in which consciousness is reached of the solidarity of interests among all the members of a social class - but still in a purely economic field' (Gramsci, 1986: 181).

In other words at this level the members of a social class become self-consciously united. However consciousness of class affiliation is limited to economic-corporate interests, i.e. to the field of production. Furthermore, although the subordinate class (such as for example the workers' class in capitalist society) formulates demands on the (bourgeois) state, these are as yet limited to the question of political and juridical (i.e. legal) equality within 'the existing fundamental structures' (of bourgeois society) (Gramsci, 1986: 181).

The formation of a fully constituted and conscious class therefore involves the overcoming of narrow economic-corporate consciousness which develops in the final and hegemonic stage in which

'one becomes aware that one's own corporate interests, in their present and future development, transcend the corporate limits of the purely economic class, and can and must become the interests of other subordinate groups too. This is the most purely political phase, and marks the decisive passage from the structure to the sphere of the complex superstructures' (Gramsci, 1986: 181).

As Sassoon argues, this phase

'is political not because the object of the struggle is the State in a narrow sense but because the struggle is manifest not only in the realm of the economic or in the area of the present State machinery but it concerns the full range of human activity' (Sassoon, 1987: 118).

At this level, which marks the stage in which an economic class gains political significance and efficacy as an articulated social force, a social class or combination of classes establishes its political and cultural predominance and leadership rooted in the victory of one of (or a combination of) 'previously germinated ideologies'. In other words in this stage, which is 'characterised by ideological struggle which attempts to forge unity between economic, political and intellectual objectives' (Mouffe, 1979 (2): 180), the emerging class or group sets about propagating

'itself throughout society - bringing about not only the unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity, posing all the questions around which the struggle rages not on a corporate but on a "universal" plane, and thus creating the hegemony of a fundamental social group [major social class or group of classes] over a series of subordinate groups. ... the development and expansion of the particular [hegemonic] group are conceived of, and presented, as being the motor force of a universal expansion, of a development of all the "national" energies' (Gramsci, 1986: 181-2).

Gramsci argued that this most crucial stage in the development of a class's political consciousness commences with its growing awareness of the potentially universal nature of its own interests. In other words the hegemony of an emerging class is established on the basis of an intellectual and moral vision which recognises the diverse interests of other groups, and accommodates them up to a 'certain point, i.e. stopping short of narrowly corporate economic interests' (Gramsci, 1986: 182).

In this stage, the hegemonic moment, an emergent class or group (or an alliance of classes or groups) can make concessions 'in order to obtain the consent of allied groups, where moral and intellectual reform organize that consent' (Morera, 1990: 151). By recognising and being responsive to the interests of other social groups, an emerging class may thus win and maintain a position of legitimacy and supremacy which relies not only on coercive

measures to sustain itself (generally directed at its opponents), but can also depend on the consent of allied groups as well as, on a broader level, the governed. This consent must, moreover, be built in the sphere of civil society (for a discussion of civil society as the arena of hegemony in Gramsci, see 3.2.4). The three moments in the development of collective political or class consciousness may therefore be said to represent

'the process from the origins of the individual consciousness of narrow economic interests to the hegemonic moment, where a universal solution is possible' (Morera, 1990: 151).

The distinction which Gramsci drew between the functions of 'coercion' and 'consent' are of central importance to his theory of the state and politics. This dimension of his political theory will be analysed more in detail in section 3.2. However it is necessary here briefly to introduce his concept of the state in order to clarify the above statements regarding the coercive and consensual measures respectively characteristic of a dominant and of a hegemonic social group or class. The meaning of the state in Gramsci was not consistent. On the one hand he used it in the narrow sense with reference to the coercive governmental substructure of a society (The sense in which it appears in orthodox Marxism-Leninism). In its characteristically Gramscian sense, however, the concept of the state is extended to embrace the (redefined) sphere of civil society, with the coercive substructure of the state now called 'political society'. This 'integral' concept of the state essentially circumscribes both the functions of coercion centered in political society, as against consensus centered in civil society. Thus a ruling class in a society both exercises its hegemony in civil society and also ensures its dominance by means of the coercive structures of political society. When, therefore, we refer to Gramsci's notion that a hegemonic class must, to the greatest possible extent, coordinate and integrate its interests with its allies but also where necessary exercise coercion to ensure its continued dominance, we are referring to a typically dualistic Gramscian

perspective regarding the measures necessary for a class's predominance in society. Thus, Gramsci argued,

'the dominant group is coordinated concretely with the general interests of the subordinate groups, and the life of the State is conceived of as a continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria (on the juridical plane) between the interests of the fundamental group and those of the subordinate groups -- equilibria in which the interests of the dominant group prevail, but only up to a certain point, i.e. stopping short of narrowly corporate economic interests' (Gramsci, 1986: 182).

Therefore although Gramsci viewed the state as creating favourable conditions for the dominant group's development and expansion, he went beyond a characteristically narrow Leninist 'view of the State as an instrument of a [dominant] class' (Sassoon, 1987: 119). The dominant group's interests prevail, but the state is not a class state in the sense of acting directly in the interests of the dominant group, acting instead

'in the name of universal interests within a field of constantly changing equilibria between the dominant class and subaltern groups' (Sassoon, 1987: 119).

In other words Gramsci argued that the interests of both the dominant as well as the subordinate groups have an economic and ideological dimension. This view underlay Gramsci's emphasis of the politico-ideological function of the dominant social group which must in addition to exercising 'dictatorship' (in the narrow Leninist sense of the dictatorship of a class) seek to establish its hegemony if its domination or supremacy is not merely to be based on coercive political relations. In Gramsci's conception therefore, the link of the dominant social group to the state is more complex than the acknowledged relations of forces between the fundamental classes (in capitalist society of capital and labour). All the other classes in society (such as for example the peasants) and all other social relations and interests which are not directly class related also go to make up the matrix of relations of forces which are in a relationship of ongoing and

continuous fluctuation affecting the life of the state. The attainment of national leadership by a fundamental group is therefore conditional upon more than its ability to transcend its own narrow economic-corporate consciousness. Such a group or class must, in addition, move beyond the sphere of class-bound interests, and class-based alliances, by acknowledging the existence of popular-democratic interests and movements, i.e. interests and movements which do not arise 'directly out of the relations of production' (Simon, 1985: 23) (Examples of such interests and movements which have become especially important in the latter part of the Twentieth Century are feminism, ethnicity, national movements of liberation, civil libertarianism, parliamentarism, ecological movements, etc). Gramsci argued that a social class or group aspiring to national hegemony must successfully combine class and popular-democratic interests to form a 'national-popular collective will' as the basis of its predominance in society (see Gramsci, 1986: 130-133).

The concept of the national-popular collective will was not set out clearly by Gramsci. However his notes indicate that it essentially refers to the combination of popular-democratic non-class and indirect class interests (i.e. interests which do not, at least not directly, have their origin in the relations of production) with the interests of the dominant class to constitute the basis for a fundamental social group's hegemony (and the creation of an alternative or new historical bloc: see Chapter 4). Thus hegemony has both class and non-class dimensions. The emergent dominant social group becomes 'hegemonic' if it succeeds in combining popular-democratic with class struggles and interests to achieve national leadership, i.e. succeeds in achieving a broad alliance of class and other social relations and forces forged on the terrain of ideology, of political consciousness, and thus extended beyond the narrowly economic-corporate level or phase of consciousness of an aspirant dominant social class. Furthermore, the class seeking hegemony must, together with the other members of its alliance, acknowledge the autonomy of function of the non-class based popular and

democratic movements. Only if the autonomy of the latter groups is acknowledged will they be able to make a full contribution to the life of the hegemonic alliance by developing their unique value and contributing accordingly to the dynamism and richness of the hegemonic alliance, and hence to the construction of a national-popular collective will. In a lengthy passage which warrants extended mention here, Mouffe describes such a 'hegemonic class' as follows:

'it is a class which has been able to articulate the interests of other social groups to its own by means of ideological struggle. This, according to Gramsci, is only possible if this class renounces a strictly corporatist conception, since in order to exercise leadership it must genuinely concern itself with the interests of those social groups over which it wishes to exercise hegemony' (Mouffe, 1979 (2): 181).

In the following section we will examine Gramsci's views regarding the agents involved in constructing a broad based national alliance and collective will upon which the hegemony of an emerging class is constructed.

3.1.1 The Political Party, The Intellectuals And Ideology In Gramsci

Gramsci's recognition of the complexities of society in the modern era, i.e. in advanced capitalist states, led him to argue that the formation of broad class and non-class based alliances is a condition of the national hegemony of a social group or class. In Gramsci's view the following question thus became crucial for any emerging class in such a society:

'When can the conditions for awakening and developing a national-popular collective will be said to exist?' (Gramsci, 1986: 130).

Gramsci's suggestions toward an answer may be reconstructed from a diverse collection of notes, with reference to the role of the modern political party, the intellectuals and ideology.

In general, Gramsci described the function of the (revolutionary) political party to develop an appropriate strategy for the attainment of social and political hegemony, and state power (see 3.2), and the function of intellectuals as primarily that of promoting political class consciousness:

'The modern Prince [i.e. political party] must be and cannot but be the proclaimer and organiser of an intellectual and moral reform, which also means creating the terrain for a subsequent development of the national-popular collective will towards the realisation of a superior, total form of modern civilisation' (Gramsci, 1986: 132-133).

In other words for Gramsci the modern political party has the primary function of providing the organisational basis for the transformation of a society's social conscience. And in Gramsci's view the intellectuals have the important function of approaching

'the people in order to guide it ideologically and keep it linked with the leading group... a model of hegemonic ideological construction' (Gramsci, 1986: 421),

The organisational and connective function of the intellectuals is therefore directed towards

'the formation of homogenous, compact social blocs, which will give birth to their own intellectuals, their own commandos, their own vanguard -- who in turn will react upon those blocs in order to develop them' (Gramsci, 1986: 204-205).

In this sense, at least, Gramsci developed Lenin's political theory in so far as he recognised the importance Lenin attached to political intervention in the transformation of society and radically extended Lenin's analysis of the 'mechanisms' involved in that political intervention. This is why 'Gramsci's analysis of the development of parties, of intellectuals, and the role of culture in general is of crucial importance' (Morera, 1990: 153) to his theory of politics.

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Gramsci began his analysis of the social and political function

of intellectuals by broadening the customary narrow definition of the intellectual, arguing that even the most 'degraded and mechanical' physical work (such as that performed by the worker in capitalist society) is intellectual in the sense that all human activity involves a minimum of 'creative intellectual activity' (Gramsci, 1986: 8). Although the degree of human intellectual activity varies, there

'is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded: homo faber cannot be separated from homo sapiens' (Gramsci, 1986: 9).

However whilst Gramsci argued that all individuals think and therefore participate intellectually in society, he did not regard individuals as 'intellectuals' (in the narrow or customary sense of professional 'thinkers') merely by dint of their innate or intrinsic capacity for thought, which characterizes all individuals. Nor did Gramsci regard only the professional 'thinkers' such as the men of letters, philosophers, artists, even journalists 'intellectuals', although the direction of the latter group's professional activity is weighted towards 'intellectual elaboration' (Gramsci, 1986: 9). Gramsci rejected as 'traditional and vulgarised' the narrow customary definition of intellectuals:

'The most widespread error of method seems to me that of having looked for this criterion of distinction in the intrinsic nature of intellectual activities, rather than in the ensemble of the system of relations in which these activities (and therefore the intellectual groups who personify them) have their place within the general complex of social relations' (Gramsci, 1986: 8; see Sassoon, 1987: 135-136).

Gramsci argued that intellectuals are better characterised by their position within prevailing social relations, i.e. relations of class and social grouping, and not by their type of work. And each of these social classes are complexes of, amongst other things, intellectual activity so that in that sense all men were intellectuals:

'All men are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals... This means that, although one can speak of intellectuals, one cannot speak of non-intellectuals, because non-intellectuals do not exist' (my emphasis) (Gramsci, 1986: 9).

The distinction Gramsci drew is therefore one of function, with the intellectual function of individuals determined not by their formal intellectual activities or qualifications etc., but by the prevailing 'ensemble' of social relations which define these functions. In the modern era, for Gramsci the era of capitalist expansion, all individuals in various spheres of society (e.g. in the cultural, political as well as economic spheres) who perform the function of active organization of the fundamental social groups in which they originate, i.e. 'who perform 'organisational and connective' in addition to educative and 'directive' functions (Gramsci, 1986: 12; see 10, 13, 16), must also be regarded as intellectuals. In civil society, the arena of hegemony (see 3.2.4) there are, for example, civil servants; in political society, the arena of coercive state institutions (see 3.2.2) there are political leaders, state functionaries and other officials in the higher echelons of the bureaucratic-administrative system; and in the economic or productive sphere there are managers, engineers, and even factory technicians (although Gramsci remained unclear on his view of the role of the technicians) (Gramsci, 1986: 10-16). All participate in and contribute towards the maintenance, development, transformation or supersession of a particular view or conception of the world, i.e. of a particular hegemony:

'The problem of creating a new stratum of intellectuals consists... in the critical elaboration of the intellectual activity that exists in everyone at a certain degree of development, modifying its relationship with the muscular-nervous effort towards a new equilibrium, and ensuring that the muscular-nervous effort itself... which is perpetually innovating the physical and social world, becomes the foundation of a new and integral conception of the world'

(Gramsci, 1986: 9).

Gramsci's underlying concern was to reject any description of intellectuals as a limited and 'autonomous' social group within society - they are not, or should not be seen to be, autarchic. And, Gramsci argued, the recognition of the various categories of intellectuals is important, not only in order to better grasp their organisational functions and potentials within the broader ambit of social transformation, but also to highlight the social basis of their distinction.

It must, however, also be remembered that Gramsci did not regard the relation between consciousness and the prevailing ensemble of social relations as mechanistic or unilinear:

'The relationship between the intellectuals and the world of production is not as direct as it is with the fundamental social groups but is, in varying degrees, "mediated" by the whole fabric of society and by the complex of superstructures, of which the intellectuals are, precisely, the "functionaries" (Gramsci, 1986: 12).

In this sense, in Morera's words,

'political institutions and the moral and intellectual elements that predominate in a social system are not immediately or mechanically determined by the economy' (Morera, 1990: 152).

For Gramsci the various forms of consciousness, whether moral and intellectual (cultural) or political, arise on the basis of structurally determined social relations. However in his view political and ideological forms, as well as intellectual activity more generally, are not mere 'reflections' of economic and class relations in the structure but are responses to these relations. In his view a good example of this capacity is the intervention of intellectuals and political parties in the organisation of an alternative hegemony. In other words the 'directive' capacity of intellectuals and the political party in the cultural and political spheres of society frequently involves developing a hegemonic solution in response to problems hindering the expansion of an

emerging or dominant class or group -- even though these solutions take place 'within the limits of the class structure, and thus ultimately, of the economy' (Morera,1990: 152).

For, as Gramsci observed, classes are never constituted in an entirely homogenous fashion, rendering the notion of class relations complex and diffuse. Moreover conflict in society, as was seen above, is also characterised by struggles between non-class based groups which cannot, at least not directly, be explained in terms of a class logic.

On this basis Gramsci distinguished between two fundamental categories of intellectuals, namely what he termed the 'traditional' and 'organic' categories or strata of intellectuals respectively. With regard to the latter category Gramsci argued that

'Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political field' (Gramsci,1986: 5, see 15, 18).

These organic intellectuals are thus closely linked to the dominant mode of production (Sassoon,1987: 137). Furthermore the category of organic intellectuals,

'which every new class creates alongside itself and elaborates in the course of its development, are for the most part "specialisations" of partial aspects of the primitive activity of the new social type which the new class has brought into prominence' (Gramsci,1986: 6).

In other words each social class (which, as we saw above, Gramsci defined in terms of its position in the prevailing mode of production) produces a category of intellectuals, often consisting of various 'strata', which primarily serve to promote the self-awareness and give articulated expression not only to the economic (professional and corporate), but also to the social,

cultural and political interests and functions of that (fundamental) social group (see McLellan, 1986: 181). Organic intellectuals therefore perform the important functions of organization, integration and leadership of members of a social class as an important condition of the creation of the overall 'conditions most favourable to the expansion of their own class' (Gramsci, 1986: 5-6), i.e. an alternative hegemonic project. The organic intellectuals, who carry out the organizing activity, are differentiated according to their specialized areas of competence and thus form a diverse yet integrated complex of relationships. Gramsci gave various examples of the organic intellectuals in capitalist society, in particular with reference to the two fundamental social classes, namely the bourgeoisie or capitalists and the proletariat or workers. Examples of organic intellectuals of the capitalist class are the capitalist entrepreneur (commercial and industrial leaders), the industrial manager, specialist economists, civil servants, and 'the organisers of a new culture, of a new legal system', etc. (Gramsci, 1986: 5). (The primary function of the organic intellectuals of the capitalist class in relation to Gramsci's second use of the concept 'hegemony', will be discussed in 3.2 below). Although Gramsci paid particular attention to the category of working class organic intellectuals he did not provide any clear examples of these. There is, however, one passage in the SPN which might throw some light on this issue. In this passage Gramsci makes an intriguing, if rather diffuse reference to the role of the political party in relation to the formation of organic intellectuals:

'The political party, for all groups, is precisely the mechanism which carries out in civil society the same function as the State carries out, more synthetically and over a larger scale, in political society... The party carries out this function in strict dependence on its basic function, which is that of elaborating its own component parts -- those elements of a social group which has been born and developed as an "economic" group -- and of turning them into

qualified political intellectuals, leaders... and organisers of all the activities and functions inherent in the organic development of an integral society, both civil and political... all members of a political party should be regarded as intellectuals... What matters is the function, which is directive and organisational, i.e. educative, i.e. intellectual' (Gramsci, 1986: 16).

We have already made reference to this passage with respect to Gramsci's general concept of the intellectuals (see p.12). However some commentators (e.g. Simon, 1985: 99-100; Hoare and Nowell Smith, 1986: 15f; Togliatti, 1979: 155, 177) have interpreted this passage as a particular, if not exclusive, reference to the revolutionary party's role in elaborating organic intellectuals. It follows that in the era of capitalism the revolutionary party is the party of the working class. Simon and Togliatti push this line of reasoning further arguing that this passage may well be interpreted as a particular reference to the revolutionary party's role as a 'collective intellectual' of the working class. Simon immediately cautions, however, that this interpretation of the revolutionary party as a collective intellectual of the working class does not mean

'that the revolutionary party should be the only organic intellectual of the working class. Gramsci proposes that every member of the party should be regarded as an organic intellectual, not that every organic intellectual of the working class should be a member of the party' (Simon, 1985: 99-100).

Simon's interpretation of this passage, which adds an interesting dimension to Gramsci's concept of the intellectuals, does not resolve the problem of the absence of explicit examples of working class organic intellectuals. What is clear is that Gramsci regarded the creation of organic intellectuals as a long and difficult process

'full of contradictions, advances and retreats, dispersals and regroupings, in which the loyalty of the masses is often

sorely tried' (Gramsci, 1986: 334).

Gramsci accorded this process a great deal of importance, arguing that the proletariat cannot rise above its economic-corporate position in capitalist society (i.e. bring about a sustainable socialist transformation of capitalist society) without the formation and elaboration of its own organic intellectuals. Thus within capitalist society, in which the proletariat is a subaltern or subordinate social group or class,

'technical education, closely bound to industrial labour even at the most primitive and unqualified level, must form the basis of the new type of intellectual' (Gramsci, 1986: 9).

Gramsci described the 'mode of being' of the new type of organic working class intellectual as fundamentally one of

'active participation in practical life, as constructor, organiser, "permanent persuader" and not just a simple orator...' (Gramsci, 1986: 10).

The suggestion here is that the central function of proletarian organic intellectuals is to facilitate or establish the basis for the transformation of the workers' class consciousness from narrow economic-corporate to that of cultural and political interests. As McLellan argues, in the case of the proletariat the task of the organic intellectuals

'was to draw out and make coherent the latent aspirations and potentialities already inherent in working-class activity' (McLellan, 1986: 181).

However, the latter category of intellectuals can only, Gramsci argued, achieve this effectively (i.e. in a sustainable manner) to the extent that they are able to translate their potential domination in the sphere of production into 'cultural hegemony' (see Gramsci, 1986: 10f) and political leadership, i.e. to the extent that the consciousness of the proletarian class can be transformed into a universal consciousness as a condition of moral and intellectual hegemony as well as political dominance by the proletariat:

'The intellectuals are the dominant group's "deputies" exer-

cising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government [or state domination]' (Gramsci,1986: 12-13).

Gramsci argued that traditional intellectuals, on the other hand, have a distinctive position in relation to established groups in the social relations of a society:

'Every "essential" social group which emerges into history out of the preceding economic structure [for example the bourgeoisie emerging from feudal relations], and as an expression of a development of this structure, has found... categories of intellectuals already in existence and which seemed indeed to represent an historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms' (Gramsci,1986: 6-7).

Gramsci cited the ecclesiastics as an example of such traditional intellectuals, that is, those intellectuals who were 'organically bound to the landed aristocracy' (Gramsci,1986: 7), the dominant 'secular' class of the feudal era. It is interesting to note Gramsci's further observations, however. The ecclesiastics, although retaining a near intellectual (i.e. educative and ideological) monopoly in feudal society, had been challenged by the formation of various other categories of non-ecclesiastic intellectuals during the transition from feudalism. These non-ecclesiastic intellectuals were 'favoured and enabled to expand by the growing strength of the central power of the monarch, right up to absolutism' (Gramsci,1986: 7). It was the role of the non-ecclesiastic intellectuals in unifying and organising the system of absolute monarchy which enabled it to transcend the phase of the break-up of feudalism successfully (Gramsci,1986: 173).

Gramsci questioned the sense of 'autonomy' which this 'historical continuity' would appear to bestow on the traditional intellectuals, at least in their own minds. He argued that although traditional intellectuals may not be organically bound to

the dominant social group of subsequent eras they are by no means independent of the historical complex of social relations:

'Since the various categories of traditional intellectuals experience through an "esprit de corps" their uninterrupted historical continuity and their special qualification, they thus put themselves forward as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group. This self-assessment... can be defined as the expression of that social utopia by which the intellectuals think of themselves as "independent", autonomous, endowed with a character of their own, etc' (Gramsci, 1986: 7-8).

Or, as McLellan has summarised Gramsci's notion of traditional intellectuals:

'Traditional intellectuals were intellectuals who -- mistakenly -- considered themselves to be autonomous of social classes and who appeared to embody a historical continuity above and beyond socio-political change... They were those intellectuals who survived the demise of the mode of production that gave them birth' (McLellan, 1987: 181).

There is a measure of ambiguity in Gramsci's observations on the category of traditional intellectuals. In the above two passages quoted from the SPN Gramsci appears to be suggesting that a category of intellectuals distinct from the dominant or fundamental class of a society does exist, 'at least in all of history up to the present' (Gramsci, 1986: 7). Yet at the same time he dismissed the notion of their independence or autonomy, which he described as a subjective self-assessment. This apparent ambiguity is, however, resolved if one conceives of the category of traditional intellectuals temporally or historically, i.e. as organic to a fundamental class of a prior mode of production. Thus, for example, a category of intellectuals such as the ecclesiastics may be described as 'organic' to the feudal era and 'traditional' relative to the bourgeois capitalist era. Nevertheless Gramsci did not make the precise function of this distinction clear, although it does provide an insight into the relation

of his important concepts of the organic intellectuals and of the political party, which will be discussed below.

Gramsci asserted that the relation between the organic and traditional intellectuals is an important key for comprehending the appropriate strategy for transforming a subordinate group, class, or formation of classes into a dominant social group, i.e. of transforming the emergent dominant social group from a narrowly economic-corporate formation, enjoying increasing supremacy in the economic field, into the dominant and leading or 'directive' (i.e. 'specialised and political') intellectual-political group:

'One of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and to conquer "ideologically" the traditional intellectuals, but this assimilation and conquest is made quicker and more efficacious the more the group in question succeeds in simultaneously elaborating its own organic intellectuals' (Gramsci, 1986: 10).

In other words, in Gramsci's view one of the primary conditions for the successful transformation of a dominant economic group into an intellectually and politically hegemonic group is the successful absorption by that group of existing categories of traditional intellectuals. However, in order for this transformation and this absorption to prove sustainable the organic intellectuals of the emerging hegemonic group must simultaneously develop a political and cultural consciousness, that is consciousness not only of its economic but also of its cultural and political functions, thereby founding or elaborating a new 'integral' conception of the world. And the 'new intellectual' envisaged by Gramsci must participate actively in practical aspects and spheres of life, constructing and creating, organizing and fulfilling the role of 'permanent persuader' and in so doing facilitate the broadening and deepening of the directive capacity of the emerging dominant social group (Gramsci, 1986: 10).

Gramsci accorded the institution of the 'modern political party' (and especially the revolutionary political party, see Gramsci, 1986: 15f) great importance as the educative arena and organisational vehicle from which the 'new intellectuals' (i.e. the organic intellectuals of the workers' class in the case of capitalist society) would emerge and exercise their central directive function and activity of laying the ideological basis for that class's hegemony in society:

'The political party for some social groups is nothing other than their specific way of elaborating their own category of organic intellectuals directly in the political and philosophical field and not just in the field of productive technique' (Gramsci, 1986: 15).

Gramsci argued that the modern political party functions as the 'mechanism' by means of which the 'organic intellectuals of a given group' are 'welded' together with the traditional intellectuals (Gramsci, 1986: 15). Central to Gramsci's notion of the relationship between the modern political party and the intellectuals was his assertion that

'all members of a political party [i.e. the leading personnel of a social group (Gramsci, 1986: 105)] should be regarded as intellectuals. ... There are of course distinctions of level to be made; [however], what matters is the function, which is directive and organisational, i.e. educative, i.e. intellectual' (Gramsci, 1986: 16).

This does not mean that Gramsci regarded all intellectuals (either organic or traditional) necessarily as members of political parties representative either of their own particular social group or that of others. However an

'intellectual who joins the political party of a particular social group is merged with the organic intellectuals of the group itself, and is linked tightly with the group' (Gramsci, 1986: 16).

The political party, in Gramsci's view, gives expression to an organic or integral conception of the world as opposed to the narrow economic-corporate function of professional associations:

'In the political party the elements of an economic social group get beyond that moment of their historical development and become agents of more general activities of a national and international character' (Gramsci, 1986: 16).

Thus far we have discussed the first meaning of Gramsci's concept of hegemony understood as a phase in the development of the political consciousness of a social class or group. This latter account in section 3.1.2 was then related to Gramsci's view of the functions of intellectuals and political parties in organising and securing the hegemonic position of an emergent social class or group in society, highlighting the special role which Gramsci accorded the dissemination of ideology in the hegemony building process. To conclude this discussion, and to establish a link to the following section, we will discuss an important example of Gramsci's many analyses of actual historical events or situations in terms of this first meaning he accorded his concept of hegemony.

In the section of the SPN entitled 'Notes on Italian History' Gramsci argued that the Italian mediaeval communes failed to 'transcend feudalism', failed to undergo an 'organic transition from the Commune to a system that was no longer feudal' (Gramsci, 1986: 54f) precisely because their bourgeoisies failed to forge a national unity (see Gramsci, 1986: 53f, 18). For Gramsci the mediaeval communes were characterized by minimal 'centralisation':

'The State was, in a certain sense, a mechanical bloc of social groups... within the circle of political-military compression... the subaltern groups had a life of their own, institutions of their own, etc., and sometimes these institutions had State functions which made of the State a federation of social groups with disparate functions not subordinated in any way' (Gramsci, 1986: 54f).

Under circumstances of relative autonomy of social groups and classes within communes no single group could exercise unifying

control and predominance. Consequently it was not possible to forge a national-popular collective will without which the bourgeoisie, the emergent class in feudal society, could not establish its national hegemony. Only with the formation of the modern (i.e. national and united) state (in Italy's case in 1870) was this unity achieved:

'The modern State substitutes for the mechanical bloc of social groups their subordination to the active hegemony of the directive and dominant group, hence abolishes certain autonomies, which nevertheless are reborn in other forms, as parties, trade unions, cultural associations...'
(Gramsci, 1986: 54f).

Gramsci regarded the Italian case as extremely significant for the way in which the Italian communal bourgeoisies of the Risorgimento (i.e. Nineteenth Century movement for the unification of Italy) failed to progress beyond the economic-corporate phase, to unite nationally and thereby transform the communal states into a 'communal republic' (Gramsci, 1986: 53f) or 'nation-state' (Sassoon, 1987: 125). Gramsci expanded his analysis of this failure by introducing the 'second' and most original meaning of his concept of 'hegemony' (involving his extended concept of the state), namely that the predominance of an emergent class or group in society involves not only political domination in the state (narrowly conceived, i.e. for Gramsci 'political society', see 3.2) but also cultural and ideological hegemony in civil society. Gramsci ascribed the failure of the Italian communal bourgeoisies to extend their power and dominance beyond the economic-corporate sphere to their failure to establish political domination in the state and intellectual and cultural hegemony in civil society. And with specific reference to the role of the intellectuals in this failure, Gramsci argued that

'it is precisely in civil society [the arena of hegemony] that intellectuals operate especially... This conception of the function of the intellectuals, I believe, throws light on the reason, or one of the reasons, for the fall of the mediaeval communes, i.e. of the rule of an economic class

which did not prove able to create its own category of intellectuals and thus exercise a hegemony [in civil society] as well as a dictatorship [in the state narrowly understood]... The Communes were thus a syndicalist state, which did not succeed in transcending this phase and becoming an integral state' (Gramsci, 1986: 56f).

Clearly, therefore, the second meaning of hegemony in Gramsci revolves on the special meaning which Gramsci imparted to his original concept of civil society as the sphere of hegemony and his concept of the 'integral' state, which subsumes the former. These and other related concepts and issues will be examined in the following section.

3.2 Hegemony And Domination: Civil Society And The State In Gramsci

Most of Gramsci's important and original writings concerning the constitution of the integral state which have been translated into English are contained in the SPN. For this reason this section will focus on the SPN. In particular, the abovementioned 'Notes on Italian History' in the SPN contain some of the most important passages in which Gramsci expressed the second meaning of his concept of hegemony, the elaboration of which is the primary goal of this section. This section will also investigate Gramsci's related concepts of 'civil society' and 'political society', which together constitute the 'integral state'. Furthermore, the discussion of the integral state in Gramsci involves reference to his concepts of the 'passive revolution', 'war of position', and 'war of manoeuvre', which will be introduced in the course of the discussion below.

3.2.1 Passive Revolution

As already mentioned, in his notes on Italian history Gramsci was especially preoccupied with the reasons for the failure of the Italian mediaeval communes to forge a national unity, and the role that the communal bourgeoisies played in this failure. Gramsci extended his analysis of Italian history to include the

period of the Risorgimento, or the Italian struggle for national liberty and unity during the Nineteenth Century. One of the concepts to emerge from Gramsci's extensive writings on the Risorgimento was that of 'passive revolution' which he formulated in the course of his description of the relation between the various parties and groupings constituting the Risorgimento (Gramsci,1986: 106-114). As will be shown the concept of passive revolution is central to the development of the second meaning of hegemony in Gramsci.

In broad terms Gramsci's concept of passive revolution refers to those historical instances in which a revolution in society takes place 'from above', designating 'a potential in any process of transition in which the state plays the dominant role' (Mouffe,1979 (3): 12). In a passive revolution, in other words, it is not the working class which is the hegemonic agent but the state. Generally speaking such a passive revolution is

'involved whenever relatively far-reaching modifications in a country's economic structure are made from above, through the agency of the state apparatuses, without relying on the active participation of the people' (Simon,1985: 47, 49).

Mouffe argues that it is a generic concept:

'The category of "passive Revolution" is often used by Gramsci to qualify the most usual form of hegemony of the bourgeoisie involving a mode of articulation [of the interests of a fundamental class to those of other social groups in the creation of a collective will] whose aim is to neutralise the other social forces. But the category is not limited to this situation: it assumes a central role and a strategic function as a crucial element in the science of politics' (Mouffe,1979 (3): 11).

Gramsci regarded the Risorgimento as an important example of passive revolution, and he identified the Piedmont state as the agent of this passive revolution (Gramsci,1986: 105-114). It is an example which is worth describing in some detail since it was

the basis of Gramsci's analysis not only of passive revolution as a species of modern forms of social transformation, or as Mouffe puts it of a 'political theory of transition' (Mouffe,1979 (3): 11; see also Buci-Glucksmann,1979: 207), but in addition constituted the background for his theoretical formulations involving the second meaning of hegemony with which we will be concerned in the following sub-section.

When identifying the major groupings involved in the Risorgimento, Gramsci accorded Cavour's Moderate Party the role of representing the interests of the scattered bourgeoisies of Italy. The other major political group was the Action Party of Mazzini and, later, Garibaldi. Gramsci argued that the republican Action Party 'did not base itself specifically on any historical class' (Gramsci,1986: 57), and was ultimately subject to the 'intellectual, moral and political hegemony' of the Moderates (Gramsci,1986: 58) constituting perhaps nothing much more than 'an agitational and propagandist body in the service of the Moderates' (Gramsci,1986: 62). For Gramsci the Moderates were the expression, the 'representatives, the leading stratum, the organic intellectuals' of the 'upper classes, to which economically they belonged... [exercising] such a power of attraction that, in the last analysis, they end up subjugating the intellectuals of the other social groups' (Gramsci,1986: 60). Gramsci described this process as 'transformism', by which he meant 'the formation of an ever more extensive ruling class' (Gramsci,1986: 58), a process brought about by the

'gradual but continuous absorption, achieved by methods which varied in their effectiveness, of the active elements produced by allied groups -- and even of those which came from antagonistic groups and seemed irreconcilably hostile. In this sense political leadership became merely an aspect of the function of domination -- in as much as the absorption of the enemies' elites means their decapitation, and annihilation' (Gramsci,1986: 59, see 109-110).

It is in this sense of being a somewhat elitist and unarticulated

formation relying for its predominance on coercive tactics that Gramsci regarded the 'hegemony' of the Moderate Party as partial or limited. Although the Moderates gained control of the Action Party and of the Risorgimento itself, it did so in a molecular or uncoordinated manner, failing to develop a 'party programme worked out and constituted according to a plan, in advance of the practical and organisational action' (Gramsci, 1986: 60). Thus although the Moderates were an organic intellectual vanguard of the bourgeoisie and in as much exercised the function of leadership, neither it nor the Action Party succeeded or even sought to establish a broader based programme of popular demands, i.e. of establishing and broadening the Risorgimento's popular and democratic character reflecting the 'essential demands of the popular masses' (Gramsci, 1986: 61; see discussion of 'national popular will', above). In fact this was actively avoided in the sense that

'what was involved was not that throughout the Peninsula there existed nuclei of a homogenous ruling class whose irresistible tendency to unite determined the formation of the new Italian national State... what was involved was not a social group [fundamental social class] which "led" other groups' (Gramsci, 1986: 104, 105).

These nuclei did exist but they did not seek to lead or 'concord their interests and aspirations with the interests and aspirations of other groups', such as the peasants. Instead they wished their interests to dominate (Gramsci, 1986: 104-5). In other words the 'masses were integrated through a system of absorption and neutralisation of their interests in such a way as to prevent them from opposing those of the hegemonic class' (Mouffe, 1979 (2): 182). Thus national unity and the political predominance of the bourgeoisie were established by the bourgeois intellectual vanguard without developing popular struggles, and hegemony over subordinate classes. The Risorgimento movement was 'characterised by its aversion to any intervention of the popular masses in state life, to any organic reform which would substitute "hegemony" for crude dictatorial "dominance"' (Gramsci, 1986:

58f). This rendered political leadership a mere 'aspect of the function of domination' (Gramsci, 1986: 59) -- dictatorship without hegemony:

'a political form of transition in which the problems of the transformations of society and the establishment of hegemony are effected through the state apparatuses' (Mouffe, 1979 (3): 12-13).

Throughout the series of notes in which Gramsci discusses his concept of passive revolution, we find the opposition between hegemony and dictatorial dominance. The relation between the concept of passive revolution and the particular importance Gramsci attached to counterposing the functions of hegemony and domination can only be fully grasped in a discussion of the distinct spheres in which these functions are exercised, namely civil society and political society unified dialectically in Gramsci's concept of the integral state. And it is to this discussion which we now turn.

3.2.2 The Integral State

Gramsci made important contributions towards the development and transformation of Marxist theory in the Twentieth Century, especially with regard to the development of a marxist theory of the state and politics. Gramsci's writings on the state are scattered throughout numerous passages in the SPN, and set out in what may at first appear to be contradictory terms (see McLellan, 1986: 188; Sassoon, 1987: 112-113, 185). To illustrate this, and to facilitate the purpose of theoretical analysis, we will first highlight and analyse those passages in Gramsci's texts which appear to contain contradictory concepts of the state. This will, in turn, lead to a broader appraisal of other related concepts, most notably that of the second sense of the concept 'hegemony', to which I referred at the beginning of section 3.1., as well as Gramsci's concept of civil society.

Generally speaking, Gramsci utilised two apparently contradictory

definitions of the state. In a section devoted to a discussion of the 'intellectuals' Gramsci made one of his most important statements regarding the state:

'What we can do, for the moment, is to fix two major super-structural "levels": the one that can be called "civil society", that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called "private", and that of "political society" or the "State". These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of "hegemony" which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of "direct domination" or command exercised through the State and "juridical" government' (Gramsci, 1986: 12, see also 52).

This description of the 'superstructural levels' implies a narrow definition of the state (or political society) which together with 'juridical government' exercises the function of 'direct domination', in contrast to civil society in which hegemony or 'indirect domination' is exercised by the dominant group. However, in a section titled 'The State' Gramsci asserted that

'The fact is glossed over that in this form of regime [in which the State's functions are limited to 'the safeguarding of public order and of respect for the laws', i.e. the 'State' in the narrow politico-juridical sense] ... hegemony over its historical development belongs to private forces, to civil society -- which is "State" too, indeed is the State itself' (Gramsci, 1986: 261).

Gramsci is alluding to a more inclusive notion of the state here, one that would encompass civil society as well. And in another passage he asserted that

'the general notion of State includes elements which need to be referred back to the notion of civil society (in the sense that one might say that State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion)' (Gramsci, 1986: 263, see 239).

In this latter passage Gramsci explicitly defined the state as somehow extended to include or overlap with civil society, while implying a distinction between the state and political society.

Thus Gramsci's frequent synonymous use of the concepts 'political society' and the 'state' in certain passages of the SPN appear to be in conflict with the numerous other passages in which Gramsci conceived of both 'political society' and 'civil society' in relation to the state. These distinct notions of the state are echoed in numerous other passages throughout the SPN in various different contexts. However for our purposes the focus remains on the reasons for Gramsci's dual perspective. Are these distinct descriptions of the state in fact contradictory, and if not why did Gramsci utilize such apparently distinct concepts of the state?

A possible way of interpreting the seemingly contradictory definitions of the state in Gramsci is suggested in another passage involving Gramsci's critique of economism:

'the distinction between political society and civil society, which is made into and presented as an organic one, whereas in fact it is merely methodological... in actual reality civil society and State are one and the same' (Gramsci, 1986: 160).

Sassoon rightly interprets this as a key passage for understanding Gramsci's unique concept of the state. In her view, which is in accordance with secondary literature generally, for Gramsci both political society as well as civil society were superstructural elements in a dialectical relation distinguishable for purposes of study and analysis. Furthermore this passage reveals Gramsci's 'dialectical view of the nature of politics' (Sassoon, 1987: 112; see also 4.2.). This, she tells us, accords with the dialectical nature of Gramsci's thought more generally which often involves presenting 'us with a totality constituted by the unity of two concepts' (Sassoon, 1987: 111). For our purposes here it is important to stress that the extended definition of the state is dominant in Gramsci (Sassoon, 1987: 112), indeed is characteristic of Gramsci.

A clue to this question, and one that underlies Sassoon's

interpretation, was provided by Gramsci in the form of an elaboration of what he called the "dual perspective" in political action and in national life' (Gramsci, 1986: 169), a notion which is characteristic of his later writings. Gramsci asserted that the dual perspective presents itself on various different levels with respect to political action, but that these

'can all theoretically be reduced to two fundamental levels, corresponding to the dual nature of Machiavelli's Centaur -- half-animal and half-human. They are the levels of force and of consent, authority and hegemony, violence and civilisation, of the individual moment and of the universal moment ("Church" and "State"), of agitation and of propaganda, of tactics and of strategy, etc.' (Gramsci, 1986: 169-170).

Gramsci cautioned against reducing the relation between these 'couples' to a mechanical succession in time, or to absolute opposites in the analytical sense, whereas they in fact represent a 'dialectical relation' or 'dialectical unity of the moments of force and consent in political action' (Gramsci, 1986: 169f). Gramsci interpreted the proletarian struggle, most especially in the West, in this light when he argued that its revolutionary strategy must be founded on the recognition 'of the dialectical unity of the moments of force and consent in political action' (Gramsci, 1986: 169f). With respect to the life of the state (the arena of political action) Gramsci similarly argued:

'Guicciardini's assertion that two things are absolutely necessary for the life of a State: arms and religion... can be translated by various other, less drastic formulae: force and consent; coercion and persuasion; political society and civil society; politics and morality...; law and freedom; order and self-discipline; ... or violence and fraud' (Gramsci, 1986: 170f).

This passage expresses Gramsci's extended definition of the state, of the dialectical unity between force and consent, as well as implying that in this extended definition of the state political activity can only be separated from activity in civil

society, the arena of hegemony, for methodological purposes.

A number of important questions flow from these observations. Firstly, in what sense did Gramsci include civil society in his extended concept of the state? Furthermore, what meaning did Gramsci attach to the concept of hegemony in these passages, and therefore to the concept of civil society? And finally, does Gramsci's linkage of civil society and political society 'within' his concept of the integral state have the effect of extending his definition of political activity, beyond the narrow conception of politics as 'conventionally' understood (see Chapter 1) as only pertaining to the activities of political government? (This latter point will be taken up in Chapter 4 together with a discussion of the 'base-superstructure' relation in Gramsci).

The first question, i.e. in what sense did Gramsci include civil society in his concept of the integral state, directs one to the dual sense in which Gramsci employs the concept of the state, i.e. in the contrast between, on the one hand, a narrow definition of the state as political government (which Gramsci referred to as 'political society'), involving government power exercised through 'governmental-coercive apparatus' (Gramsci, 1986: 265, see also 261, 262, 263, 267, 268); and on the other of the extended or 'integral' concept of the state, which as we saw above incorporates elements of civil society, that is 'hegemony protected by the armour of coercion' (Gramsci, 1986: 263, see also 239, 264, 265, 275).

According to Gramsci the identification of state and government (i.e. the narrow concept of the state) amounts to 'a representation of the economic-corporate form' (Gramsci, 1986: 262) of the state, underlying which is a basic confusion between the spheres of civil society and political society. In other words for Gramsci the state

'which is usually understood as political society (or dictatorship; or coercive apparatus to bring the mass of the

people into conformity with the specific type of production and the specific economy at a given moment)' must instead be conceived of

'as an equilibrium between political society and civil society (or hegemony of a social group over the entire national society exercised through the so-called private organisations, like the Church, the trade unions, the schools, etc.)' (Gramsci, 1986: 56f, see 12).

In this sense the state

'is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules...' (Gramsci, 1986: 244).

By this state is 'understood not only the apparatus of government, but also the "private" apparatus of "hegemony" or civil society' (Gramsci, 1986: 261). For Gramsci the concept of the integral state therefore primarily serves to indicate that it is in civil society that a dominant class's hegemony is exercised (Mouffe, 1979 (3): 10).

Gramsci argued, and this is a point which follows on directly from our discussion in section 3.1, that any class seeking to be politically dominant as well as hegemonic must progress beyond the economic-corporate stage (by acquiring political class consciousness), i.e. it must not merely acquire economic dominance and governmental power (strictly political) but, in addition, must establish intellectual and moral (cultural) hegemony by 'creating a State "with the consent of the governed"' (Gramsci, 1986: 53f). If such a class were to remain merely dominant in the economic sphere, and even if that class acquired state power in the narrow sense, the state would remain a mere 'syndicalist state' (see Gramsci, 1986: 56f). Citing the historical example of the Italian mediaeval communes, discussed above, Gramsci claimed that the supremacy of a social class or group

'manifests itself in two ways, as "domination" and as "intellectual and moral leadership". A social group

dominates antagonistic groups, which it tends to "liquidate", or to subjugate perhaps even by armed force; it leads kindred and allied groups. A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise "leadership" before winning governmental power (this indeed is one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to "lead" as well' (Gramsci, 1986: 57-58).

This passage gives expression to the dialectical nature of the relation in Gramsci between 'domination' and 'leadership', i.e. the functions of domination and leadership are not absolute opposites: they do not preclude but rather presuppose one another. Furthermore, the attainment of a sustainable form of political leadership and governmental power by a class thus entails more than mere control of the apparatuses of the state:

'there can and must be a "political hegemony" even before the attainment of governmental power, and one should not count solely on the power and material force which such a position gives in order to exercise political leadership or hegemony' (Gramsci, 1986: 57f).

As Mouffe argues, Gramsci's concept of the integral state is thus related to two levels,

'first, it involves the enlarging of the social base of the state and the complex relations established between the state, the hegemonic class and its mass base [our first sense of Gramsci's concept of hegemony, see 3.1]; second, it involves the enlarging of the state's functions, since the notion of the integral state implies the incorporation of the apparatuses of hegemony, of civil society, to the state' (Mouffe, 1979 (2): 182).

Gramsci's extended concept of the state reflects his fundamental concern to develop an account of the state which is adequate to its modern complexities. He regarded as partial both the narrow liberal conception of the state as an expression of the general

will and independent of particular interests, as well as the orthodox Marxist conception of the state as an instrument of dominant class interests:

'For Gramsci it is important to emphasise that the dimension of the expression of general interests does exist but that it is always linked, through a hegemonic system, to the interests of a fundamental class' (Mouffe, 1979 (3): 10).

The concept of the integral state also serves to illustrate the need for appropriate strategies which revolutionary forces require in their attempts to challenge bourgeois domination based on domination in political society as well as hegemony in civil society. In Gramsci's view direct assaults by the forces of revolution on the complex and sturdy foundations of the bourgeois state can only lead to frustration if the basis for an alternative hegemony has not already been articulated. Gramsci expressed this need in a discussion of revolutionary strategies and tactics involving his dialectically related concepts of the 'war of manoeuvre' and 'war of position' which will be the focus of our discussion below.

3.2.3 War Of Position And War Of Manoeuvre

Throughout his scattered writings on the state Gramsci explicitly emphasised the importance of analysing the state, any state, within the appropriate historical context. In other words Gramsci was acutely aware of the historical epochs or periods in which empirical states operate and function since in different epochs different state forms arise out of relations of forces unique to that epoch and which are in 'continuous motion and shift of equilibrium' (Gramsci, 1986: 172). Indeed much of what Gramsci had to say about the state can only be comprehended with reference to his analyses of history. Gramsci makes an important distinction of this sort when he distinguishes between 'advanced' or modern states (i.e. the bourgeois capitalist state) and pre-modern states (feudal forms etc.) in terms of his concepts of the 'war of movement' or 'manoeuvre', and 'siege warfare' or the 'war of position' (Gramsci, 1986: 229-238). In their military sense, the

war of movement includes, for example, direct military assault (frontal attack); while the war of position refers to, for example, trench warfare and the 'whole organisational and industrial system of the territory which lies to the rear of the army in the field' (Gramsci, 1986: 234). The key to understanding the appropriate military strategy resides in the acknowledgement that

'in wars among the more industrially and socially advanced States, the war of manoeuvre must be considered as reduced to more a tactical than a strategic function' (Gramsci, 1986: 235).

Gramsci drew a parallel to this in the 'art and science of politics':

'at least in the case of the most advanced States, where "civil society" has become a very complex structure and one which is resistant to the catastrophic "incursions" of the immediate economic element (crises, depressions, etc.)' (Gramsci, 1986: 235), i.e. 'only politics creates the possibility for manoeuvre and movement' (Gramsci, 1986: 232).

Here Gramsci suggested a qualified historical parallel between major economic crises and the war of movement in political activity. The war of movement, of frontal attack on the state understood in its integral sense, must at all times, and especially in the modern era, take the enemy's potential for a war of position into account, i.e. must take cognisance of the degree of development of (the institutions of) civil society. To await economic crises, especially in the modern epoch, as if they were decisive historical opportunities for the defeat of a dominant class

'was a form of iron economic determinism... out and out historical mysticism, the awaiting of a sort of miraculous illumination' (Gramsci, 1986: 233).

In the sphere of politics the

'superstructures of civil society are like trench-systems of modern warfare. In war it would sometimes happen that a fierce artillery attack seemed to have destroyed the enemy's

entire defensive system, whereas in fact it had only destroyed the outer perimeter; and at the moment of their advance and attack the assailants would find themselves confronted by a line of defence which was still effective. The same thing happens in politics, during the great economic crises' (Gramsci, 1986: 235).

The war of position and war of movement are not, Gramsci argued, to be viewed as opposites or absolute alternatives. Instead they are in a constantly evolving and changing dialectical relation to each other, hence the need for a comprehensive revolutionary strategy rooted in the acknowledgement that the hegemony of a dominant social group can only successfully be opposed and ended if the (tactical) war of movement and (strategic) war of position are regarded as integral parts of revolutionary strategy.

Gramsci illustrated the importance of this historical perspective with reference to the Russian Revolution of 1917, which he described as the last occurrence of a successful war of movement in the history of politics, marking 'a decisive turning-point in the history of the art and science of politics' (Gramsci, 1986: 235). He criticized Trotsky's notion of 'Permanent Revolution' and suggested that Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution might in fact merely be the political reflection of the theory of frontal or direct assault (Gramsci, 1986: 236, see 238). The reference to Trotsky aside, it is clear that Gramsci strongly adhered to the view that the only appropriate revolutionary strategy is one which takes not only the economic conditions but also the national characteristics of a particular country or society into account, i.e. the 'general-economic-cultural-social conditions in a country' (Gramsci, 1986: 236, see also 243). Thus, Gramsci argued, in (Czarist) Russia where the 'structures of national life are embryonic and loose, and incapable of becoming "trench or fortress"' (Gramsci, 1986: 236), a frontal attack on the state could bring about the transference of state power to the subordinate classes, which in fact it did in 1917. However in Western Europe, and especially since World War One, where society is

'modern' in the sense that 'structures of national life' are complex and articulated, revolutionary strategy must not rely on a frontal attack on the state which would only lead to the defeat of the revolutionary or progressive forces. The fundamental task is to identify the nature of civil society in a country in order to identify 'which elements of civil society correspond to the defensive systems in a war of position' (Gramsci, 1986: 235), and to determine whether civil society 'resists before or after the attempt to seize power' (Gramsci, 1986: 236). Gramsci concluded this section with one of his most important comments on the nature of the state and civil society:

'In the East the State is everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between State and civil society, and when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks: more or less numerous from one State to the next...' (Gramsci, 1986: 238; see also 243).

In a subsequent passage dealing with the transition from the war of manoeuvre to the war of position in the sphere of politics, Gramsci concluded that

'all this indicates that we have entered a culminating phase in the political-historical situation, since in politics the "war of position", once won, is decisive definitively. In politics, in other words, the war of manoeuvre subsists so long as it is a question of winning positions which are not decisive, so that all the resources of the State's hegemony cannot be mobilised. But when, for one reason or another, these positions have lost their value and only the decisive positions are at stake, then one passes over to siege warfare...' (Gramsci, 1986: 239).

In the modern (bourgeois) state these 'decisive positions' are, according to Gramsci, concentrated in civil society, the arena of hegemony. The great importance Gramsci attached to his concept of civil society as the arena of hegemony should, on the basis of

the above discussions, already be quite evident. In the following section the main features of Gramsci's concept of civil society will be highlighted and their significance for Gramsci's concept of hegemony clarified.

3.2.4 Gramsci's Concept Of Civil Society

Gramsci referred to civil society as the ensemble of organisms generally described as 'private' and which correspond to the function of "hegemony" which the dominant group exercises throughout society' (Gramsci, 1986: 12). And in the Lettere dal carcere Gramsci described civil society as the arena of 'hegemony of a social group over the entire national society exercised through the so-called private organisations, like the Church, the trade unions, the schools, etc.' (Gramsci, 1986: 56f, see also 258), as well as political parties (Gramsci, 1986: 53). It is also the arena in which intellectuals operate especially (Gramsci, 1986: 56f). These 'so-called private organisations' or 'complexes of associations' (Gramsci, 1986: 243), Gramsci argued, may generally be referred to as the 'hegemonic apparatus of the ruling group', i.e. the dominant group's 'cultural and intellectual organisation' (Gramsci, 1986: 170f). It is on the basis of such passages in the SPN that Simon formulates a definition of Gramsci's concept of civil society, one accepted by Morera (Morera, 1990: 178). Civil society comprises

'all the "so-called" organisations such as churches, trade unions, political parties and cultural associations which are distinct from the process of production and from the public apparatuses of the state. All the organisations which make up civil society are the result of a complex network of social practices and social relations, including the struggle between the two fundamental classes, capital and labour' (Simon, 1985: 69).

As this definition suggests, for Gramsci the composition of civil society in modern or advanced capitalist states is not restricted to organisations emerging from the relations of struggle between the two fundamental classes, but is also the scene of organisa-

tions which are the product or expression of a complex set of social relations evolving out of popular-democratic struggles. In the modern era this latter dimension of civil society in Gramsci can, for example, be linked to such non-class or indirectly class related questions as national movements of liberation, race, environmental movements, feminism, etc. Furthermore, although civil society, in contrast to political society,

'operates without "sanctions" or compulsory "obligations", [it] nevertheless exerts a collective pressure and obtains objective results in the form of an evolution of customs, ways of thinking and acting, morality, etc.' (Gramsci, 1986: 242).

In his discussion of the integral state, Gramsci occasionally referred to the dimension of civil society as the 'ethical State' (Gramsci, 1986: 263) which he described as the 'autonomous, educative and moral activity of the secular State' (Gramsci, 1986: 262). Here the reference is to civil society's function as the arena in which the consent of the governed is secured by means of the moral and intellectual education of the masses. For Gramsci, therefore, civil society was the arena of both class and non-class ideological and political struggles, from which emerges the hegemony of a dominant social group (In a different sense, Gramsci also referred to the ethical state in relation to his concept of regulated or communist society: see Chapter 4). In other words civil society

'is ethical or moral society, because it is in civil society that the hegemony of the dominant class has been built up by means of political and ideological struggles' (Simon, 1985: 69).

When one considers Gramsci's concept of civil society in its proper dialectical relation to political society it becomes clear why Gramsci accorded all modern states (i.e. states with well developed civil societies) an ethical function:

'In my opinion, the most reasonable and concrete thing that can be said about the ethical State, the cultural State, is this: every State is ethical in as much as one of its most

important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes. The school as a positive educative function, and the courts as a repressive and negative educative function, are the most important State activities in this sense: but, in reality, a multitude of other so-called private initiatives and activities tend to the same end -- initiatives and activities which form the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes' (Gramsci, 1986: 258, see 10-11).

This passage contains an implicit reference to Gramsci's notion of the extended or integral state, expressing a dialectical view of the relation between its political and ethical functions to which correspond the political and cultural hegemony of the dominant social class or group. Furthermore, in this passage Gramsci established a relation of correspondence between the level of the population's moral and cultural development (the function of hegemony) and the needs of the productive forces for development 'and hence to the interests of the ruling classes' (Gramsci, 1986: 258). In other words Gramsci conceived of the functions of the integral state in terms of their potential for establishing the conditions in which the production forces (of a particular mode of production) can develop. And since civil society is the arena of both class struggles as well as popular-democratic struggles (i.e. the struggle for hegemony) its relations reflect the interests of the dominant social group.

Yet another aspect, which flows out of the last point, is the way Gramsci alluded to Marx's base-superstructure metaphor concerning the link between (or totality of) the social, economic, and political relations of a society. However Gramsci went beyond the classical Marxist conception of society when he introduced his concept of hegemony identified with civil society. Gramsci's dialectical distinction between the functions of civil society

and political society resulted in a conception of capitalist society composed of three distinguishable sets of social relations, namely

'the relations of production, the basic relation between labour and capital; the coercive relations which characterise the state; and all other social relations which make up civil society' (Simon, 1985: 69).

In other words for Gramsci capitalist society is constituted of the dual relations of the superstructure expressed in terms of the concept of the integral state, and the economic base constituted of the relations of production.

This conceptualisation of advanced capitalist society raises a further set of questions since Gramsci implied the inadequacy of the more narrowly dualistic content of the classical Marxist conception of capitalist society. In other words Gramsci implied that the relation between base and superstructure can only be considered in proper terms if one avoids the twin dangers of determinism and ideologism by means of the concept of the integral state in which civil society is conceived of as mediating the economic and political spheres. And this aspect points, in turn, to the notion of the relative autonomy of the state and politics in Gramsci, since the state is no longer conceived of simply as an instrument of the ruling class, and politics is no longer simply a matter of class struggles. In other words Gramsci's abandonment of the notion of the direct correspondence between the relations of production and the state means that the mechanical relationship between economics and politics in, for example, Marxism-Leninism is rejected in favour of a more complex conception of modern bourgeois society mediated by the hegemonic sphere of civil society which is the scene of a struggle between a multitude of political and ideological relations of forces involving both class and non-class struggles.

In the following chapter we will see how Gramsci articulated the relationship between his concept of hegemony and the integral

state in his dialectical concept of the 'historical bloc'.

CHAPTER 4

GRAMSCI'S CONCEPTS OF SOCIETY AND POLITICS

One of the pivotal themes of the SPN was Gramsci's sustained criticism of economistic and idealistic or 'superstructural' interpretations of Marx's theory of history. Unfortunately Gramsci never had the opportunity to forge into a systematic treatise his fragmentary critique of these two theoretical tendencies or 'deviations' which, he argued, occur all too frequently in the 'orthodox' version of historical materialism. His SPN nevertheless contain an implicit general framework for just such a structured critique.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe how Gramsci's revaluation of historical materialism led him to emphasize a dialectical reading of Marx's classical texts, rejecting what he regarded as the twin theoretical errors of 'economism' and 'ideologism'. The chapter will be divided into two main sections, the first dealing with Gramsci's general theory of history (divided into four sub-sections) and section 4.2 with Gramsci's concept of politics.

4.1 Gramsci's Concepts Of History And Society

In section 4.1.1 Gramsci's general concept of 'philosophy', as well as aspects of his historical methodology and his general understanding of the genesis of the philosophy of marxism will be discussed. In particular we will focus on Gramsci's historicism and dialectics with specific reference to the importance of Marx's 1859 'Preface' for Gramsci's general theory of history and his critique of economism. In section 4.1.2 the distinction Gramsci made in his analysis of concrete societies between 'organic' and 'conjunctural' movements, that is between longer-term and shorter-term historically active forces, will be highlighted and analysed with a view to discussions of his concepts of the 'relations of force' and the 'historical bloc' in sections 4.1.3 and 4.1.4 respectively. In these latter sections the ac-

count of Gramsci's critique of economism will be developed and will serve as the theoretical basis for the discussion of his concept of politics in section 4.2.

4.1.1 'Unity In The Constituent Elements Of Marxism'

For Gramsci the most important distinction between Marxism and all previous 'philosophies' is its emphasis on the dialectical relation between masses and intellectuals:

'The philosophy of praxis does not tend to leave the "simple" in their primitive philosophy of common sense, but rather to lead them to a higher conception of life. If it affirms the need for contact between intellectuals and simple it is not [as in catholicism] in order to restrict scientific activity and preserve unity at the low level of the masses, but precisely in order to construct an intellectual-moral bloc which can make politically possible the intellectual progress of the mass and not only of small intellectual groups' (Gramsci, 1986: 332-333).

Marxist theory is concerned with the 'politically possible', therefore, in the sense of the mediating or connective function of organic intellectuals who work out and make coherent the 'principles and the problems raised by the masses in their practical activity, thus constituting a cultural and social bloc' (Gramsci, 1986: 330).

Gramsci developed this view of the function of Marxism in accordance with his general concept of philosophy. Gramsci argued that there is in all intellectual activity, in all philosophy, an ('essential') organic link between the various strata of intellectuals on the one hand, and on the other the people or masses out of whose interaction a variety of problems have arisen which intellectuals seek to analyse. Gramsci argued, that a philosophical movement properly so called is devoted to

'elaborating a form of thought superior to "common sense" and coherent on a scientific plane [yet never forgetting] to remain in contact with the "simple" and indeed [finding] in

this contact the source of the problems it sets out to study and to resolve...Only by this contact does a philosophy become "historical"... and become "life" (Gramsci,1986: 330). Furthermore only through the 'organic quality' of philosophical thought, organisational stability, and central cultural direction can an alternative hegemony be formed in society. And central to all of this is politics which, as Hoare and Nowell Smith tell us, figures in Gramsci's thought,

'philosophically, as the central human activity, the means by which the single consciousness is brought into contact with the social and natural world in all its forms' (Hoare and Nowell Smith,1986: xxiii), 'conscious action (praxis) in pursuit of a common social goal' (Gramsci,1986: 326).

This conception of politics in effect circumscribes all social relations, all forms of activity in pursuit of social transformation. Implicitly this amounts to a significant broadening of Marx's reductionist concept of politics in terms of class conflict. We will return in section 4.2 to the crucial importance for Gramsci's transformation of Marxism by his inclusive concepts of 'politics' and 'political activity'.

In Gramsci's view Marxism derives its doctrinal unity from the dialectical relation of its constituent theoretical elements and concepts. To the extent that the 'activities' of philosophy, politics and economics are

'necessary constituent elements of the same conception of the world, there must be, in their theoretical principles, a convertability from one to the others and a reciprocal translation into the specific language proper to each constituent element. Any one is implicit in the others, and the three together form a homogeneous circle' (Gramsci,1986: 403).

This is a view of Marxism as a 'socio-practical activity, in which thought and action are reciprocally determined' (Gramsci,1986: 333f). And this conception of the unity of praxis and theory in a nexus of practical activity and theoretical

reflection was the underlying reason for Gramsci's consistent rejection of the 'widespread conception' that the 'philosophy of praxis' (i.e. Marxism) can be divided, in an abstract triadic fashion, into three constituent parts, namely

'a pure philosophy, the science of dialectics, the other parts of it being economics and politics' (Gramsci, 1986: 431, see 402-404).

In a note entitled 'The constituent parts of the philosophy of praxis' Gramsci argued that the central doctrines of Marxism may well be grounded in three great European traditions, namely 'classical German philosophy, English classical economics and French political activity and science' (Gramsci, 1986: 431; also 402-404), yet a description of its main historical sources does not and cannot account for its fundamentally revolutionary character. For Gramsci Marxism derives its unique character from its distinctive theses and not from its generic historical sources:

'It will be asked whether the philosophy of praxis is not precisely and specifically a theory of history, and the answer must be that this is indeed true but that one cannot separate politics and economics from history' (Gramsci, 1986: 431).

The 'philosophy of praxis proper' constitutes

'the science of dialectics or the theory of knowledge, within which the general concepts of history, politics and economics are interwoven in an organic unity' (emphasis added) (Gramsci, 1986: 431, see 434-436).

Gramsci's interpretation of Marxism as an organic theory of history had important implications for his analysis of society. In general terms Gramsci argued that the theory of history (i.e. historical materialism) as formulated by Marx cannot be reduced to a preconstituted framework or scheme for the predictive analysis of specific social phenomena or whole societies. This was for two main reasons. On the one hand Gramsci regarded Marx's writing broadly as the foundation of the Marxist philosophical

tradition and not as a fully constituted theory of history and politics. And on the other hand Gramsci argued that it would be inappropriate to apply the general theoretical principles contained in Marx's writing to the complexities of historical realities, such as the analysis of a particular society, without regard for the latter's specific empirical variables.

The first point relates to Gramsci's distinction between Marx's contribution of a Weltanschauung or 'world view' (Gramsci, 1986: 381) constituting the basis for the 'philosophically directed production' of an historical epoch, and the sense in which it was later forged into a revolutionary 'philosophy of praxis', most notably by Lenin. In this view Marx articulated an

'original and integral conception of the world... [which] initiates intellectually an historical epoch which will last in all probability for centuries' (Gramsci, 1986: 382).

In Gramsci's view Marx thus laid the foundation for the philosophy of Marxism, that is the general theoretical principles and concepts of a world view. Gramsci, drawing a comparison between Marx's philosophy and Lenin's political theory (and particularly Lenin's theory of revolution and its realization in the Soviet Revolution), argued that

'They express two phases: science and action, which are homogeneous and heterogeneous at the same time' (Gramsci, 1986: 382).

In other words for Gramsci there is a dialectical nexus between theory and praxis. In Gramsci's interpretation of Marxism this 'nexus' occurs between Marx's philosophy and its historical function in Lenin's theory, which to become 'action' must be realized in the mode of activity of an historically actual social group or class:

'How is the statement that the German proletariat is the heir of classical German philosophy to be understood? Surely what Marx [it was in fact Engels] wanted to indicate was the historical function of his [Marx's] philosophy when it became the theory of a class which was in turn to become a State? (Gramsci, 1986: 381; see 330).

Gramsci thus understood the development of the philosophy of Marxism to be a dialectical progression. In his view Marx's formulation of a philosophy proper constituted the first phase of this progression. This is followed by the hegemonic stage, that is by the formulation of a Marxist 'science of politics' which obtains its historical function when actualised by an historically formed social group or class. And in the final stage the philosophy of Marxism becomes 'action' when it gains its political expression in the foundation of a new state. Each of these phases give rise to intellectual expressions of their own:

'To the economic-corporate phase, to the phase of struggle for hegemony in civil society and to the phase of State power there correspond specific intellectual activities' (Gramsci, 1986: 404).

And since the intellectual expressions or activities of each phase are not preconstituted, they 'cannot be arbitrarily improvised or anticipated' (Gramsci, 1986: 404). In other words the actualization of the philosophy cannot escape its development through the phases of the economic-corporate, the hegemonic, and the relations of power (see 3.1):

'In the phase of struggle for hegemony it is the science of politics which is developed; in the State phase all the superstructures must be developed, if one is not to risk the dissolution of the [integral] State' (Gramsci, 1986: 404).

This is a view of reality which 'does not exist on its own, in and for itself, but only in an historical relationship with the men who modify it' (Gramsci, 1986: 346). One consequence of this was Gramsci's view that the philosopher of praxis, that is the Marxist philosopher, can only affirm the eventual realization of the philosophy in a generic fashion or manner:

'In reality one can "scientifically" foresee only the struggle, but not the concrete moments of the struggle, which cannot but be the results of opposing forces in continuous movement' (Gramsci, 1986: 438).

Therefore rather than detaching the philosophy of Marxism from praxis by regarding it as a sufficient 'scientific' basis for

predictive social analysis, Gramsci argued that in

'reality one can "foresee" to the extent that one acts, to the extent that one applies a voluntary effort and therefore contributes concretely to creating the result "foreseen"' (Gramsci, 1986: 438).

This passage must not be interpreted as an invocation of the pure act of will, i.e. Gramsci did not argue that one can will the attainment or realisation of one's prediction. Rather, for Gramsci the efficacy of creative human intervention involves an estimation of the potentials inherent in a particular structural situation. Once these potentials or possibilities become conscious it is possible to contribute purposively towards their realisation. Once again we find a dialectical unity in Gramsci, i.e. that between necessity and will.

In a related move Mouffe argues that Gramsci is concerned to reestablish the link between theory and praxis

'lost in the economistic interpretations of Marx's thought and to formulate an interpretation of historical materialism which would relocate it as a mode of intervention in the course of the historical political process. This new interpretation of historical materialism as "science of history and politics"... necessitates a break with the positivist conception of science which reduces its role to the establishment of laws' (Mouffe, 1979 (3): 6).

For our purposes it is significant that Gramsci's view of the genesis of philosophy suggests a possible reason for the absence in Marx of an explicit theory of politics. According to Gramsci's view Marx essentially introduced a new Weltanschauung and thus could not, except aphoristically, have provided anything like a theory or science of politics. In particular, he could not have foreseen the historical process whereby the state's functions would be expanded to accommodate its changing relationship with what Gramsci called civil society (Morera, 1990: 179). It is this

historical process which, according to Gramsci, is involved in the struggle for hegemony. In other words in Marx's writings the philosophy of praxis had not yet made the transition from a newly formulated world view to an ideology, where Gramsci understands ideology as a practical set of principles for the realisation of a world view, a 'form of practical activity or will in which the philosophy is contained as an implicit theoretical "premiss"' (Gramsci, 1986: 328), and not as a 'dogmatic system of eternal and absolute truths' (Gramsci, 1986: 407). Gramsci argued that only once this transition from a philosophy to an ideology is realised can Marxism come to acquire, in practice, 'the fanatical granite compactness of the "popular beliefs" which assume the same energy as "material forces"' (Gramsci, 1986: 404).

A second reason for Gramsci's rejection of the view that the Marxist theory of history contains within itself a universally applicable set of abstract principles and propositions which can be applied to social analysis with the precision of the natural sciences, relates to Gramsci's view of the complexity of social realities. These are always characterised by a particular matrix of forces in movement; forces which can moreover be quite arbitrary and unpredictable, even external to a particular society (e.g. international relations). Thus it may be possible in terms of the Marxist theory of history to formulate general theses, such as the dialectical relation between society's antagonistic structures and the formation of social classes and groups whose conflict is the substance of politics. Yet as we saw in Chapter 3 not all political phenomena can, according to Gramsci, be reduced to class relations, subject as they are to other variable forces as well. As Gramsci wrote:

'It is necessary to pose in exact terms the problem of the predictability of historical events in order to be able to criticise exhaustively the conception of mechanical causalism, to rid it of any scientific prestige and reduce it to a pure myth which perhaps was useful in the past in a backward period of development of certain subaltern social

groups' (Gramsci, 1986: 438).

Gramsci's awareness of the need to develop a Marxist conception of society which is more adequate to the complexities of the modern capitalist state, without being rigidly schematic or mechanistic, informed his later writings and was probably his greatest contribution to Marxist theory.

These two points, I will argue, go to the heart of Gramsci's critique of economism, illustrating his concern to analyse concrete societies with due regard for the dialectical totality of their constituent parts. This concern is nowhere more apparent than in those of Gramsci's notes in which he paid particular attention to Marx's 1859 Preface. Gramsci frequently commented on the Preface; in fact this runs like a leitmotif throughout his writing: the Preface is discussed in a variety of different contexts and in relation to a great many issues (see for example, Gramsci, 1986: 106f, 114, 138, 162, 177n, 336f, 365, 367f, 371, 410f, 432, 459, 460). From these passages it is clear that for Gramsci the crux of all the questions that have arisen around the 'philosophy of praxis' are related to establishing how, without relapsing into an economistic reading of classical Marxism, the historical movement can be said to arise on the structural base (Gramsci, 1986: 431-432). Throughout the SPN Gramsci seeks to resolve this problem on the basis of his interpretation of two core propositions of the Preface. The first of these core propositions is 'that men acquire consciousness of structural conflicts on the level of ideologies' (Gramsci, 1986: 365). Elsewhere Gramsci formulates this proposition 'That "men become conscious (of the conflict between the material forces of production) on the ideological level" of juridical, political, religious, artistic and philosophical forms' (Gramsci, 1986: 371). In other words, since awareness of structural contradictions occurs at the ideological level, any predetermined knowledge of the forms of concrete social development is precluded:

'A structural phase can be concretely studied and analysed only after it has gone through its whole process of

development, and not during the process itself, except hypothetically and with the explicit proviso that one is dealing with hypotheses' (Gramsci, 1986: 408).

Gramsci referred to this temporal disjuncture between objectively operating structural conditions and the retrospective human awareness or consciousness of this process at the ideological level of the superstructures as the moment of 'organic crisis' or 'cathartic moment' (see Gramsci, 1986: 366-367). And it is because of this disjuncture that Gramsci consistently emphasised the development of a mass-based revolutionary consciousness (the terrain of organic intellectuals and the political party) as a necessary condition of sustainable social transformation or revolution. For Gramsci this involved, as was argued in Chapter 3, the 'realisation of a hegemonic apparatus, in so far as it creates a new ideological terrain, [which] determines a reform of consciousness' (Gramsci, 1986: 365). It was for this reason that Gramsci highlighted the need to better understand the capacity or degree of potential efficacy of superstructural spheres with respect to the process of the revolutionary transformation of society. And this superstructural potential, realized by political education and through intervention by politically active forces, varies in each 'situation', i.e. at each stage or moment of society's historical development.

According to some commentators (see e.g. Bobbio, 1979; Salamini, 1981) Gramsci as a Marxist theoretician not only realised the crucial importance of the superstructures, but actually asserted the primacy of the superstructures. This amounts to an overstatement of the position. That Gramsci devoted the greater part of his writing to the study of the superstructural sphere is evident even from a cursory reading of his letters and notes. Gramsci was acutely aware of the need to elaborate a Marxist theory of the superstructures in view of the fact that Marx had for 'purely accidental reason... dedicated his intellectual forces to other problems, particularly economic (which he treated in systematic form)' (Gramsci, 1986: 426). However, it is impor-

tant to emphasize that Gramsci, in much of his writing and especially during his imprisonment, focused on the proper interpretation, and not on the refutation, of the fundamental principles and theses of Marx's social theory.

The second proposition from the 1859 'Preface' to which Gramsci repeatedly referred pertains to Marx's view as formulated by Gramsci that

'Mankind [i.e. society] only poses for itself such tasks as it can resolve; ...the task itself only arises when the material conditions for its resolution already exist or at least are in the process of formation... A social order does not perish until all the productive forces for which it still has room have been developed and new and higher relations of production have taken their place, and until the material conditions of the new relations have grown up within the womb of the old society' (Gramsci, 1986: 432).

Gramsci argued that according to this second proposition Marx ascribed to man an active role in the transformation of society, posing tasks and undertaking creative action arising from the variety of options and opportunities that objective socio-economic conditions pose. Given that for Gramsci, too, the economic sphere was in the final analysis predominant, his problem in combatting economistic conceptions of society was, in Paggi's words, therefore

'that of freeing himself from a linear derivation from a given economic base of the multiple aspects of historical and political processes' (Paggi, 1979: 137).

Gramsci emphasised that the Marxist dialectic is crucial to a proper understanding of the historical opportunities for social transformation since it

'deals with the problem of causality in the concrete analysis of historical and political processes... [and] relates the multiplicity of factors [i.e. relations of forces] to the basic struggling forces [i.e. economic sub-structure; class relations] and shows how a specific outcome is reached

through the exclusion of other objectively possible alternatives' (Paggi, 1979: 131; see Gramsci, 1986: 402-403). Only if the active human role in the unfolding of history is understood does the structure cease:

'to be an external force which crushes man, assimilates him to itself and makes him passive; and is transformed into a means of freedom, an instrument to create a new ethico-political form and a source of new initiatives' (Gramsci, 1986: 367; see also Simon, 1985: 91; Morera, 1990: 164).

In other words Gramsci does not refute the primacy of the economic structure in the 'final analysis'. He did however explicitly reject the notion that the existence of certain objectively necessary structural conditions are sufficient for the socio-political transformation of society. Indeed, this is precisely the context in which political will can come into its own:

'Where these conditions exist "the solution of the task becomes 'duty', 'will' becomes free"' (Gramsci, 1986: 410, see also 137-138, 158-168, etc.).

It may thus be possible to show, as historical materialism does, that there are structural forces which operate with relative 'automatism' determining the contours of the superstructures. In order to mount an effective historical initiative (revolution) to transform society the forces operating in the economic structure must clearly be analysed, and the resulting insights be integrated into a general strategy for action. However, in Gramsci's interpretation of Marx these structural forces are themselves subject to 'relations of forces' (see 4.1.3) which are not all structural. Gramsci argued that in Marx's 'critique' of political economy (here a reference to Marx's major economic writings and not only to the 1859 Preface; see Gramsci, 1986: 411f), Marx

'starts from the concept of the historical character of the "determined market" and of its "automatism"... [and] analyses in a realistic way the relations of forces deter-

mining the market, it analyses in depth their contradictions, evaluates the possibilities of modification connected with the appearance and strengthening of new elements' (Gramsci, 1986: 411).

Establishing the relation of structure to superstructures is therefore

'not a question of "discovering" a metaphysical law of "determinism", or even of establishing a "general" law of causality. It is a question of bringing out how in historical evolution relatively permanent forces are constituted which operate with a certain regularity and automatism' (Gramsci, 1986: 412).

The primacy of the relatively permanent structural forces is therefore not to be assumed as an ineluctable law operating in the abstract, but as an historically determined premiss in movement:

'necessity exists when there exists an efficient and active premiss, consciousness of which in people's minds has become operative, proposing concrete goals to the collective consciousness and constituting a complex of convictions and beliefs which acts powerfully in the form of "popular beliefs". In the premiss must be contained, already developed or in the process of development, the necessary and sufficient material conditions for the realisation of the impulse of collective will; but it is also clear that one cannot separate from this "material" premiss, which can be quantified, a certain level of culture, by which we mean a complex of intellectual acts and, as a product and consequence of these, a certain complex of overriding passions and feelings, overriding in the sense that they have the power to lead men to action "at any price" (Gramsci, 1986: 412-413).

This long quote contains, in embryonic form, some of Gramsci's most characteristic and important propositions. Thus Gramsci argued that (political) consciousness is consciousness of changing conditions in the structure, the relations of which at any

given time presents man with alternative courses of action, which are largely but never wholly circumscribed by structural conditions. In this view conscious (political) action can be directed to effective and fundamental social change, and indeed often must be so directed as a precondition for social change (see Gramsci, 1986: 168 and section 4.2.2). Furthermore, structural antagonisms, when sufficiently pronounced, produce organic crisis, that is a

'conjuncture where there is a generalized weakening of the relational system defining the identities of a given social or political space, and where, as a result there is a proliferation of floating [variable] elements' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1989: 136; see 4.1.2).

And awareness of structural antagonisms which produce this crisis can, in conjunction with conscious human action, result in fundamental social change. The important point here is that such action and such change are not inevitable (determined mechanistically) since the tendencies of development in the structure are not necessarily realised (Gramsci, 1986: 408) and revolutionary consciousness may not be sufficiently developed. Only on this understanding

'can all mechanism and every trace of the superstitiously "miraculous" be eliminated, and it is on this basis that the problem of the formation of active political groups, and, in the last analysis, even the problem of the historical function of great personalities must be posed' (Gramsci, 1986: 432).

So when Gramsci described the economic base (with a given 'degree of development of the productive forces') as comprising 'objective relations within society' or '(logically) fundamental social relations' (Gramsci, 1986: 176; see also 4.1.2), it is important to remember Gramsci's premiss of the organicity of society's relations. This means rejecting undialectical notions of causality in the constitution of economic, social, and political relations. The dialectic 'designates the existence of antagonisms between opposing social forces [logic of connections

and mediations]' (Paggi, 1979: 133) as the objectively given basis for the continuously unfolding process of social development. Moreover, as Paggi explains, it

'is also the cognitive method necessary to gain a concrete and realistic representation of the antagonistic social unity... the tool needed to gain knowledge of the unity, specificity, and concreteness of social phenomena by organically relating the otherwise separate and juxtaposed individual constitutive elements' (Paggi, 1979: 133).

As revised and reconstituted by Gramsci, the dialectic thus provides Marxism with the means to think through the complex organic interconnections and interactions of the various elements and forces operating in society. Study and analysis of social phenomena must be conducted in accordance with the reconstitution of their totality. For Gramsci this always essentially meant affirming the dialectic of historical forces (dialectical antagonisms arising out of historically active social contradictions) against the dialectic of abstract concepts and ideas (Gramsci, 1986: 370; see Gramsci in Paggi, 1979: 138-139). For Gramsci it was of prime importance

'to re-establish the link between theory and practice lost in the economistic interpretations of Marx's thought and to formulate an interpretation of historical materialism which would relocate it as a mode of intervention in the course of the historical political process' (Mouffe, 1979 (3): 6).

For our purposes the most important dimension of Gramsci's dialectic is his view of the organicity of the social whole, i.e. his rejection of the orthodox Marxist interpretive schema involving the relation of cause and effect between economic base and politico-ideological superstructure as well as his related rejection of political reductionism. Gramsci's reformulation of historical materialism aimed to develop a framework for 'thinking' or conceiving the various levels of the social formation in their relative autonomy which allowed for the effectivity of the superstructures whilst retaining a distinctively Marxist perspective.

In the following section we will take a further step in our analysis of Gramsci's revaluation of historical materialism where we will examine the relation between 'organic movements' and 'conjunctural movements' in Gramsci's theory, a relation representing Gramsci's dialectical conception of historically active forces which vary in their degree and extent of efficacy understood both in a temporal as well as structural sense.

4.1.2 Organic And Conjunctural Movements: The Analysis Of Situations

As was suggested in the above discussion, Gramsci's analysis of society distinguished between organic and conjunctural movements as two key components. On this view there are two basic types or sets of characteristics; those that determine the general nature of 'situations' and their development, and those which appear 'effective' at particular junctures in its development:

'Difference between "situation" and "conjuncture": the conjuncture is the set of immediate and ephemeral characteristics of the economic situation... Study of the conjuncture is thus more closely linked to immediate politics, to "tactics" and agitation, while the "situation" relates to "strategy" and propaganda, etc.' (emphasis added) (Gramsci, 1986: 177f).

In other words when Gramsci referred to the study of how 'situations' should be analysed (how the study of society should be approached) he made a distinction between longer-term and shorter-term historically active forces. Gramsci termed the former 'organic movements' which are 'relatively permanent', and which are distinguishable from 'movements which may be termed "conjunctural" (and which appear as occasional, immediate, almost accidental)' (Gramsci, 1986: 177). Gramsci did not portray these distinct movements as incompatible or contradictory, seeking instead to emphasize their complementary interaction:

'Conjunctural phenomena too depend on organic movements to be sure, but they do not have any far-reaching historical significance; they give rise to political criticism of a

minor, day-to-day character, which has as its subject top political leaders and personalities with direct governmental responsibilities' (Gramsci, 1986: 177).

Organic phenomena, on the other hand,

'give rise to socio-historical criticism, whose subject is wider social groupings -- beyond the public figures and beyond the top leaders' (Gramsci, 1986: 178).

For Gramsci the great importance of clearly distinguishing organic and conjunctural phenomena or movements is demonstrated in the study of an actual socio-historical period. When, in such a period, a long-term crisis becomes manifest in society, this indicates that

'incurable structural [i.e. organic] contradictions have revealed themselves (reached maturity), and that, despite this, the political forces which are struggling to conserve and defend the existing structure itself are making every effort to cure them, within certain limits, and to overcome them' (Gramsci, 1986: 178).

Sassoon describes this dialectical process as 'the appearance of the organic contradiction at the level of the occasional [i.e. conjunctural]' (Sassoon, 1987: 184). In Gramsci's view,

'these incessant and persistent efforts... form the terrain of the "conjunctural", and it is upon this terrain that the forces of opposition organise' (Gramsci, 1986: 178).

And this 'immediate' struggle between conservative and revolutionary social forces

'is developed in a series of ideological, religious, philosophical, political, and juridical polemics, whose concreteness can be estimated by the extent to which they are convincing, and shift the previously existing disposition of social forces' (Gramsci, 1986: 178).

The opposition forces thus seek, by means of struggle, to 'demonstrate that the necessary and sufficient conditions already exist to make possible, and hence imperative' (Gramsci, 1986: 178) historically significant changes to society, such as the reorganization of structural relations. 'Imperative' in the sense

that change is not inevitable but has, due to irreconcilable or incurable structural contradictions, become historically necessary. The full realization of these new structural relations, depends on the intervention of the forces of opposition on the terrain of the conjunctural, that is by means of political organisation and intervention in an immediate sense. (This latter notion is clearly a key to Gramsci's concept of politics, and will be explicated in section 4.2.).

Gramsci criticised historico-political analyses which failed to establish and demonstrate a proper dialectical relation between organic and conjunctural phenomena. This he believed

'leads to presenting causes as immediately operative which in fact only operate indirectly, or to asserting that the immediate causes are the only effective ones. In the first case there is an excess of "economism", or doctrinaire pedantry; in the second, an excess of "ideologism". In the first case there is an overestimation of mechanical causes, in the second an exaggeration of the voluntarist and individual element' (Gramsci, 1986: 178; see Paggi, 1979: 152).

This is another way of saying that in the study, and life, of a society the relatively indirect long-term causality of organic movements as well as the immediacy of conjunctural movements must both be recognized in their own right, and posed in a correct dialectical relation to one another. However the 'dialectical nexus between the two categories of movement, and therefore of research, is hard to establish precisely' (Gramsci, 1986: 178). Moreover whilst this difficulty may result in serious error in historiography, such error is all the more crucial in the sphere of political science which is directed, not merely towards the reconstruction of a society's past, but towards the 'construction of present and future history... as a conscious "means" to stimulate to [political] action' (Gramsci, 1986: 179).

Gramsci maintained that the dialectical distinction of the organic-conjunctural relation (which is another example of a

'dual couple' in Gramsci: see Chapter 3), which was for him a fundamental principle of historical methodology, must be applied to the interpretation of all socio-economic and political 'situations', relations, structures, and 'concrete historical facts'. Gramsci devoted a great deal of writing to this end, in the course of which he developed his concepts of the 'relations of force' (i.e. the relation of a society's social, political, and military forces) and the 'historical bloc' (or Gramsci view of society's structure-superstructure relationship) (see 4.1.3 and 4.1.4 respectively). And it is to an analysis of these two concepts which we now turn.

4.1.3 The Relations Of Force

In the discussion of organic and conjunctural movements above it was argued that Gramsci emphasised the dialectical relation between relatively permanent as against occasional or immediate forces operating in society. For Gramsci the two forms of 'movement' were directly linked, yet at the same time their relation was one of disjuncture. In other words although conjunctural movements 'depend on organic movements' (Gramsci, 1986: 177), they have a short-term or immediate effect on the relations of society and to that extent have a reality and specificity of their own. Conjunctural movements might therefore in a sense be described as 'relatively autonomous' of the organic movements out of which they arise. This is related to Gramsci's conception of 'relations of force' to which we must now turn.

Gramsci's discussion of the concept of the relations of force in contained in the note entitled 'Analysis of Situations. Relations of Force', in many ways one of the most important in the SPN. The concept of the relations of force constitutes a further attempt to 'elucidate the complexity of the concrete situation... a schema as a guide for analysis' (Sassoon, 1987: 184). As such the various levels or moments of forces identified must be regarded as methodological distinctions, i.e. an aid to the analysis of concrete social phenomena and societies, especially if we keep in

mind that Gramsci viewed society in terms of a unified dialectical focus.

Gramsci identified three broad sets ('levels' or 'moments') of forces operating within a society's structural and superstructural spheres. The first of these Gramsci described as the primary level consisting of

'a relation of social forces which is closely linked to the structure, objective, independent of the human will, and which can be measured with the systems of the exact or physical sciences' (Gramsci, 1986: 180).

In other words Gramsci conceived of this primary level of social forces as closely linked to the material forces of production which

'provides a basis for the emergence of the various social classes, each one of which represents a function and has a specific position within production itself' (Gramsci, 1986: 180-181).

In this, as Simon tells us, Gramsci 'is simply giving the classical Marxist definition of the emergence of a class' (Simon, 1985: 28), i.e. a mainstream Marxist view of the organic socio-economic structure existing in society.

The second level or moment of the relations of force, and the one most distinctive of Gramsci's analysis, was the

'relation of political forces; in other words, an evaluation of the degree of homogeneity, self-awareness, and organisation attained by the various social classes' (Gramsci, 1986: 181).

Gramsci divided this into three further levels, outlined in detail in section 3.1 above, 'corresponding to the various moments of collective political consciousness', the first two economic-corporate in nature, and the third marking the transformation of the emerging economic class into a politically fully conscious or hegemonic class (political force). In Gramsci's view only once such a social class or group has developed a hegemonic

consciousness (i.e. the potential to establish its socio-political hegemony) can it be described as having a full political existence as a political force or historical subject in the life of a society.

Gramsci's description implies the potential for uneven development of the political forces active in society since social classes may vary in the degree to which their political consciousness is developed. In Sassoon's words, for

'a given relationship of structural forces, a variety of political relationships can exist since each force in the field can vary in its own political development whatever its structural features' (Sassoon, 1987: 185).

The third and final level of the relations of force is constituted of the 'relation of military forces', which at times, i.e. especially during periods of revolutionary social change, is 'directly decisive. (Historical development oscillates continually between the first and the third moment, with the mediation of the second). Two levels can be distinguished: the military level in the strict or technical military sense, and the level which may be termed politico-military' (emphasis added) (Gramsci, 1986: 183).

The relation of military forces mark the most active moment in the evolution of social classes, the moment of most active political intervention and of revolution.

As was stated above Gramsci's account of the relation of social forces as the first and most basic level underscores his acceptance or adoption of Marx's general definition of the formation of social classes as linked to the level of development of the material forces of production and the division of labour (i.e. economic structure). However Gramsci's description of the two 'subsequent' levels of the relations of force involves two of the most characteristic principles of his political writing. Firstly it involves the 'mediating' role of the relation of political

forces. This indicates the potential efficacy of political intervention in order to change the existing formation of the relations of force. Furthermore it involves Gramsci's related rejection of both 'economism' and 'ideologism' which is implicit in the active function Gramsci ascribes to the political and military relation of forces but within the constraints of given structural forces and relations (i.e. economically based class relations).

There are a number of general observations regarding this notion of the relations of force which must be made in order to clarify the concept itself as well as indicate its relation to Gramsci's broader concept of society. The first of these points is related to our discussion in section 3.1. In that section it was seen how in the course of actual history the three levels of the relation of political forces

'imply each other reciprocally -- horizontally and vertically, so to speak -- i.e. according to socio-economic activity (horizontally) and country (vertically), combining and diverging in various ways' (Gramsci, 1986: 182).

In other words the 'various combinations and dispersions of the various elements' go to make up the process by which a class develops from a subordinate position to one of hegemony (Morera, 1990: 154). As Morera argues, the process by which a class develops from its subaltern to its hegemonic position suggests a more general problem with regard to the interpretation of Gramsci's concept of the relations of force. The 'successive' or 'subsequent' moments in the development of the relations of force, as well as the various levels of the relation of political forces, could be conceived of as a complex of relations existing at one point in time, i.e. synchronically. However they could also be interpreted diachronically in terms of a 'temporal process' (Morera, 1990: 151), i.e. as historically successive stages developing over time. Interpreted as a temporal process Gramsci's concept of the relation of political forces is related to his concept of hegemony understood as the development of the

political consciousness of an emerging class (i.e. of an alternative hegemony) over successive historical stages in time. On this interpretation the 'level of economic-corporate interests, is an empirically necessary temporal precondition for the others, inasmuch as it is closely linked to the structure' (Morera,1990: 154; see Gramsci,1986: 180), i.e. the relation of socio-economic forces conceived of as temporally prior. This would accord with Gramsci's general principle of historical necessity, outlined in 4.1.1, namely that although structural forces have a 'tendency' to develop they do not develop inevitably, thus requiring the intervention of political forces to enable their further development (Gramsci,1986: 401, 404-407, 410-414). It follows that although objective structural conditions are a temporally prior necessity for the development of political forces, it is not only structural conditions but also political action which have a function of historical necessity. In Femia's words,

'although men are rooted in an economic reality that circumscribes their free initiative, this objective world of fact is not to be passively registered; human intervention is decisive' (Femia,1988: 117).

And political intervention itself is contingent upon the development of political consciousness which, though rooted in objective structural relations and forces, does not develop with any degree of inevitability, relying as it does on the connective and organisational functions of the political party and the intellectuals.

Alternatively Gramsci's concept of the relations of force, and especially those of the relation of political forces, can be interpreted as a conjunctural situation, an interpretation which is intended 'to unravel the general structuring of a social whole at a given time' (Morera,1990: 154). A problem with this interpretation of the relations of force appears from Gramsci's distinction between organic and conjunctural movements (see 4.1.2), i.e. the distinction between historically active forces which have a longer-term and shorter-term effect on the development of the so-

cial totality. Thus the development of social groups and classes cannot be understood only by studying the more immediate dynamic forces operating in a particular situation, since their development is also a function of the organic structural sphere and as such may not, at any given time, yet have become 'observable' (i.e. have manifested themselves at the level of human consciousness).

The interaction of conjunctural and organic movements, of empirically observable immediate forces (such as political forces operative within a given structure) and organic forces (such as the formations of classes), can only be understood historically. This suggests that the alternative approaches to Gramsci's concept of the relations of force may in fact most appropriately and even necessarily be conceived of as dual aspects of an integrated analysis, i.e. as 'abstractions which are untenable in isolation' (Morera, 1990: 155).

The diversity of the relations of force, and especially the efficacy of the relation of political and military forces, are important dimensions of Gramsci's rejection of any linear determination of the superstructures by the economic structure:

'It may be ruled out that immediate economic crises of themselves produce fundamental historical events; they can simply create a terrain more favourable to the dissemination of certain modes of thought, and certain ways of posing and resolving questions involving the entire subsequent development of national life' (Gramsci, 1986: 184).

Gramsci cites the French Revolution of 1789 as an example of a fundamental historical event in which

'the rupture of the equilibrium of forces did not occur as the result of direct mechanical causes -- i.e. the impoverishment of the social group which had an interest in breaking the equilibrium, and which did in fact break it [the 'flourishing' bourgeoisie]. It occurred in the context of conflicts on a higher plane than the immediate world of

having primacy. In other words Gramsci saw the economic structure as the determining base for the reproduction of social relations and therefore also as basic to the superstructural sphere. However Gramsci departed from the classical Marxist concept of the superstructure (or superstructural sphere) when he conceived of it in terms of his dialectical concept of the extended or integral state, i.e. civil society plus political society or hegemony armoured by coercion (see 3.2). Furthermore it was argued that Gramsci's concept of hegemony is most appropriately and properly understood in terms of a dual meaning. On the one hand as a process by which an emerging social class or group attains collective political consciousness, and on the other hand with reference to civil society as the arena of hegemonic action. In this section I will examine Gramsci's conception of the dialectical relation between the superstructural levels and the structural or economic base of society, a relationship which he expressed in terms of his concept of the 'historical bloc' and of the 'relations of force' operating within the historical bloc.

One of the key concerns underlying Gramsci's revaluation of the classical Marxist conception of the structure-superstructure relation was his continued attempt to counter the error of 'economism' in 'vulgar' readings of the classical texts of Marx without relapsing into 'ideologism' (or the idealization of the superstructures):

'The claim, presented as an essential postulate of historical materialism, that every fluctuation of politics and ideology can be presented and expounded as an immediate expression of the structure, must be contested in theory as primitive infantilism, and combated in practice with the authentic testimony of Marx, the author of concrete political and historical works' (Gramsci, 1986: 407).

The question, of course, is just how the relations between base and superstructure should be understood. In rejecting 'economism' while acknowledging the primacy of the base Gramsci was also not committed to some form of interactionism between base and super-

structure as having co-equal significance. Gramsci did argue that the material base or structure 'sets limits to historical change [and] shapes the contours of the superstructure' (Femia,1988: 116). But it would nevertheless be a serious error to reduce Gramsci's theory of social development to a 'facile interactionism'. Gramsci believed, in Femia's view,

'only that the basic trajectory of human history is explained by the development of productive forces. The specific course of any given society... may vary in accordance with the dynamics of its own individual situation' (Femia,1988: 116).

And this 'dynamic' of individual situations is, as Morera also argues (Morera,1990: 158), constituted by the immediate determinants and variable relations of forces in a given situation. This accords with the general Gramscian principle of the methodological distinction between long-term and short-term forces operative in society, and of the distinction between organic movement and conjunctural movement.

However, only if one understands that Gramsci conceived of these movements and forces in their totality can one begin to unravel his broader dialectical conception of society's structure-superstructure relation as a 'unity of opposites and of distincts' (Gramsci,1986: 137). Gramsci's dialectical conception of the relation between a society's economic structure and the sphere of hegemony in civil society, extending as well to the relations of domination in political society, marked a culminating point in his political writing. With this he established a unifying focus for many of his original concepts and some of his most fundamental theoretical concerns.

Gramsci made little direct reference to his concept of the historical bloc. It can nonetheless be shown that he employed the concept in two ways. In its first use the historical bloc constituted the focus of Gramsci's conception of the proper dialectical relation between structure and superstructure, a relation

between society's economic and political spheres mediated by the hegemonic relations of civil society (see Paggi, 1979: 140, Boggs, 1980: 116). A second dimension to Gramsci's concept of the historical bloc is his analysis of various forms of concrete social formations, especially that of advanced capitalist society, in which various class formations and alliances arise in relation to constantly changing relations of hegemony and domination. We will deal with each of these in turn.

In its first and most frequent use the concept of the historical bloc encapsulates Gramsci's characterisation of society's structure-superstructure relation:

'Structures and superstructures form an "historical bloc". That is to say the complex, contradictory and discordant ensemble of the superstructures is the reflection of the ensemble of the social relations of production' (Gramsci, 1986: 366).

However as with his methodological distinction between the spheres of civil society and political society in his concept of the integral state (i.e. between the spheres within the superstructure) Gramsci's distinction between the spheres of structure and superstructure may also best be regarded

'as a methodological principle, that is, as a general hypothesis for gathering and controlling evidence and for generating particular theories about the link between structure and superstructure in given societies' (Morera, 1990: 140).

The concept of the historical bloc is thus descriptive of the link between 'two areas of abstract reality' (Sassoon, 1987: 121), i.e. society's structural and superstructural spheres. For Gramsci this link or relationship between these spheres was one of necessary reciprocity, 'a reciprocity which is nothing other than the real dialectical process' (Gramsci, 1986: 366).

In an early note Gramsci alluded to this relationship in metaphorical terms:

'if men take cognizance of their task in the terrain of the

superstructures, this means that between structure and superstructure there is a necessary and vital link, such as is the case in the human body between the skin and the skeleton' (Gramsci in Morera, 1990: 139-140).

From these and other passages it is apparent that Gramsci was conscious of the need to overcome a conception of the relationship between structure and superstructure in terms of an absolute dichotomic opposition (see Paggi, 1979: 139-141). Instead he sought to theorize the organic link or relation between society's structural productive activity and its superstructural political and cultural activity and consciousness in terms of a dialectical process. Structure and superstructures were conceived as inseparable aspects of the historical bloc as a greater dialectical whole.

Thus when Gramsci referred to ideology as a 'necessary superstructure of a particular structure' and not the 'arbitrary lucubrations of particular individuals' (Gramsci, 1986: 376), he affirmed the principle of the dialectical unity and reciprocity of the structure and the superstructure. For, Gramsci argued, ideology properly understood is 'historically organic', i.e. the formation of actual ideologies is an historically necessary process specific to given structures inasmuch as they "organise" human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc.' (Gramsci, 1986: 377). Gramsci therefore rejected any notion of ideology either as 'arbitrary' or as an epiphenomenal reflection of the economic structure. Gramsci's methodological distinction between the structural material forces as 'content' and superstructural ideologies as 'form' should be understood in terms of a unified focus which in his view tended to affirm

'the conception of historical bloc in which precisely material forces are the content and ideologies are the form, though this distinction between form and content has purely didactic value, since the material forces would be inconceivable historically without form and the ideologies would

be individual fancies without the material forces' (Gramsci, 1986: 377).

What is more, as was argued above, for Gramsci ideologies 'in practice', i.e. as 'popular beliefs', assume the efficacy of material forces in the historical process (Gramsci, 1986: 404). In its first sense, therefore, the historical bloc constitutes a synchronic theoretical expression of the dialectical 'unity between nature and spirit (structure and superstructure), unity of opposites and of distincts' (Gramsci, 1986: 137).

Gramsci's dialectical conception of social relations was the basis for his rejection of economism and ideologism, twin tendencies in the undialectical interpretation of historical materialism. Gramsci argued that economistic readings of Marx involve 'an overestimation of mechanical causes'; and an undialectical conception of the superstructures involves an exaggeration of the voluntarist and individual element' (Gramsci, 1986: 178). The dialectical concept of the historical bloc thus counteracts both

'idealist distortion of the Marxist dialectic on the one hand and an economistic deviation on the other... [which] converge in their reduction of the dialectic to one or other of the fundamental aspects of reality, either the ethical-political or the economic' (Sassoon, 1987: 120).

The questions of economism and ideologism in Gramsci are also related to the second use of Gramsci's concept of the historical bloc, i.e. in the diachronic analysis of concrete or historically actual social formations or societies. Gramsci argued that the social forces operative in a concrete society form an integrated and ever changing complex of economic, political, and cultural (moral and intellectual) relations or 'blocs' in a situation in which one mode of production is dominant. This complex of blocs constituting the historical bloc must be viewed in the continuously varying ways in which they combine and relate to the existing fundamental historical bloc of the dominant or ruling

group or class. More particularly, the historical bloc can produce a variety of political blocs constituted of variable combinations of political and governing alliances. In consequence, as Sassoon argues,

'the political representation of a concrete historical bloc varies so that there is never a complete reflection of the forces that make up the historical bloc' (Sassoon, 1987: 121).

Sassoon argues that a fundamental historical bloc can therefore produce a variety of government coalitions and even state forms without this representing a disruption in the general configuration of that historical bloc. The point which needs to be stressed is that variations in the political bloc do not necessarily represent in a 'one to one way' changes taking place in the historical bloc as a whole (Sassoon, 1987: 122; Morera, 1990: 138-139). In this sense Gramsci allows for the possibility of a disjuncture between developments of the mode of production in the economic sphere and the varying formations of political forces at the level of the superstructures.

The relation between the socio-economic, political and cultural spheres or dimensions in Gramsci's conception of real historical blocs is consequently not mechanistic, and the state therefore cannot be viewed as the direct instrument of a ruling class. The 'disjuncture' in Gramsci's conception of the structure-superstructure relation in concrete societies does not, however, mean that Gramsci rejected the classical Marxist thesis of the primacy of the economic structure in the last instance (Morera, 1990: 139), as some commentators have concluded (see discussion of Bobbio below). To understand this it is necessary to recall Gramsci's concept of the integral state, as involving the superstructural spheres of both civil society and political society, the arenas of the relations of consensual hegemony and coercive domination respectively. The dynamic process of the formation and transformation of actual historical blocs crucially involves the ability of a dominant social group or class to ex-

tend its hegemonic consciousness beyond the confines of that class, beyond a static group awareness, to embrace and unify the consciousness of a broad alliance of historical class and non-class popular democratic forces capable of effecting historical acts of social transformation:

'Just as hegemony represents a higher stage within the political moment of the development of a class, so an historical bloc is in one sense an effort to infuse this hegemony throughout society, above all by means of class alliances' (Adamson, 1980: 176; see also 3.1).

In other words Gramsci expanded or extended the narrow instrumentalist concept of the state as a class state to the 'integral' concept of the state as the expression of the interests of an organic bloc of class and non-class popular-democratic forces formed on the basis of the hegemony of the leading group or class. Hence 'the very nature of an historical bloc is bound up with the extent of the hegemony of the dominant class' (Sassoon, 1987: 122). Therefore although the concrete historical bloc involves the effective domination by the ruling group or class, this dominance is rooted in the complexity of prevailing social relations and forces which do not stand in a one to one causal relation with either the ruling group or the form of the prevailing historical bloc, allowing a possible distinction between the dominance of the ruling group and the direct governing formation or party. Moreover, the relation of the prevailing ruling group to allied groups and the directly governing formation is hegemonic in nature; while with respect to rival or enemy groups or classes it is expressed in terms of coercive relations of domination. In other words hegemony is a function of the historical bloc inasmuch as a social class or group seeking to maintain or establish its dominance must wherever possible exercise persuasion and not force in its relation with its potential allies. For, in Gramsci's words,

'two "similar" forces can only be welded into a new organism... either by binding them to each other as allies or by forcibly subordinating one to the other... a recourse

to arms and coercion... can be nothing more than a methodological hypothesis [since f]orce can be employed against one's enemies, but not against a part of one's own side which one wishes rapidly to assimilate, and whose "good will" and enthusiasm one needs' (Gramsci, 1986: 168).

This aspect of Gramsci's analysis of concrete historical blocs is tied up with a general distinction which he drew between modern (i.e. bourgeois or capitalist) state forms and pre-modern (i.e. feudal) state forms, or between the extended or integral state and narrow economic-corporate state forms respectively (see Chapter 3). Gramsci argued that it is only possible for a dominant class or group to form an organic or hegemonic historical bloc if it has succeeded in transforming itself into a nationally hegemonic group within an integral state in which civil society, as the sphere of hegemony, has been successfully developed and expanded. However, although there is an important link between the concept of hegemony and the formation of concrete historical blocs in Gramsci's analyses, he did not assert that the formation of an historical bloc presupposes a dominant group's national hegemony. Nor, for that matter, did he suggest that a another class seeking to establish its own dominance in society by means of forming an alternative historical bloc had necessarily to do so on the basis of an alternative national hegemony. A dominant group or class which establishes a mass based intellectual and moral bloc on the basis of a hegemonic consciousness 'will by definition be hegemonic vis-a-vis itself' (Adamson, 1980: 178). Nevertheless the alliances (whether political or economic) such a group enters into are not necessarily hegemonic (i.e. consensual and voluntary) but may be coercive in nature. In short national hegemonies presuppose historical blocs, but not all historical blocs are hegemonic. Nonetheless the extent to which a society's superstructural sphere of hegemony (civil society) is articulated determines the ability of a dominant class to build an organic or hegemonic historical bloc. The reason for this is that it is only once a state has developed beyond the economic-corporate stage,

i.e. only when it has developed the sphere or area of hegemony, that

'it is an extended or integral State, and only then can it represent a fully developed and maximally extended historical bloc. The social and historical base of the State in this case will be much stronger' (Sassoon, 1987: 123; see Gramsci, 1988: 29).

Thus far we have provided an account of the basic characteristics of the concept of the historical bloc in Gramsci's political writings. However in the secondary literature on Gramsci there is considerable controversy regarding the interpretation of the historical bloc. It is a complex debate, yet it is one which centers on a crucial issue: i.e. to what extent, if at all, can Gramsci as perhaps the most important Marxist theoretician of the superstructures, be portrayed as the theoretician of their primacy? The problem for Gramsci's status as a Marxist is implicit in this question, and will be addressed in detail in the following section.

4.1.5 Some Important Interpretations Of The Historical Bloc

Two accounts of Gramsci's historical bloc which have enjoyed recognition as representative of two schools of Gramscian thought are those of Norberto Bobbio and Jacques Texier. Bobbio's essay, which appears in the English translation as 'Gramsci and the Concept of Civil Society', was first published in 1968. It was soon the subject of controversy claiming that Gramsci ascribed primacy to the superstructural sphere in Marxist theory, a view with which Salamini, for example, agrees (Salamini, 1981). In a well reasoned and forceful response Texier 'dismantled' Bobbio's position. However Texier's account of Gramsci is characterised by a certain degree of reductionism which he operated between Gramsci and Marx. Texier's 'reversion' to an 'orthodox' interpretation of Gramsci has therefore not been without controversy of its own, especially if one considers Gramsci's growing reputation as a decidedly unorthodox thinker.

In his essay on the subject of Gramsci's concept of civil society Bobbio expresses the view that the originality of Gramsci's Marxism consisted in two basic things. Firstly, Gramsci's definition of civil society differed from that of Marx:

'the revaluation of civil society is not what links him to Marx... but what distinguishes him from Marx. In fact contrary to what is commonly believed, Gramsci derives his own concept of civil society not from Marx, but openly from Hegel' (Bobbio, 1979: 31).

Furthermore, Gramsci relocated civil society in the superstructure:

'Civil society in Gramsci does not belong to the structural moment, but to the superstructural one... upon which the whole of Gramsci's conceptual system is based' (Bobbio, 1979: 30).

Having argued that Gramsci redefined and relocated civil society whilst retaining Marx's notion of its primacy (see Chapter 2), Bobbio suggests that Gramsci thereby revaluated a fundamental tenet of historical materialism, namely that of the 'primacy' of the economic base (a notion which itself is highly contentious, as was indicated in Chapter 2 and above). In a passage worth quoting at length, Bobbio 'asks' whether

'this shift in the meaning of civil society in Gramsci induce us to ask the question if... he has placed "the real home, the theatre of all history" elsewhere?... Both in Marx and in Gramsci, civil society, and not the state as in Hegel, represents the active and positive moment of historical development. Still, in Marx this active and positive moment is a structural moment, while in Gramsci it is a superstructural one. In other words, what they both stress is no longer the state, as Hegel had done... but civil society, meaning that they entirely reversed, in a certain way, Hegel's conception. But with the difference that Marx's reversal implies the transition from the superstructural or conditioned moment to the structural or conditioning one, while Gramsci's reversal happens within the superstructure

tent of civil society had important implications for its relation to the state, and to the 'social totality'. Gramsci, in the manner of Marxists generally, conceived of the 'social totality' in terms of the metaphor base-superstructure -- at least this is the case methodologically. However, Bobbio argues (and this point is crucial to Bobbio's argument), Gramsci retained Marx's view that civil society

'and not the state as in Hegel, represents the active and positive stage of historical development', which in Marx 'is a structural phenomenon, while in Gramsci it is superstructural' (Bobbio, 1988: 83).

According to Bobbio, therefore, Gramsci's re-definition of civil society suggests a fundamental revaluation of the Marxist concept of society. For if civil society is not constituted of economic relations but of the institutional forms regulating economic relations in addition to the hegemonic cultural and intellectual organization of the dominant or ruling social group; and if as such a superstructural element it nonetheless retains its position of determinate primacy vis-a-vis the state, then Gramsci's conception of the social totality can be considered as fundamentally distinct from that of Marx's. In effect Gramsci has accorded determinate primacy to an element of the superstructure. Indeed, this introduces a profound theoretical 'innovation with respect to the whole Marxist tradition' (Bobbio, 1979: 30).

On the basis of these points, Bobbio identifies what in his view are the two fundamental distinctions between the conceptions of the base-superstructure relation in Marx and in Gramsci. The first of these, Bobbio argues, is Gramsci's notion that:

'the ethical-political moment, being the moment of freedom understood as consciousness of necessity (that is of material conditions), dominates the economic moment through the recognition of objectivity by the active subject of history (Bobbio, 1979: 34).

Bobbio argues that it is through the active subject's recognition of the objectivity of the 'material conditions' that the latter

are resolved into an instrument of the active subject, which can then be directed towards the achievement of the subject's desired aim. Thus for Bobbio it is the superstructural 'ethical-political moment' and not the structural 'economic moment' which is determining.

Bobbio describes his view of the second fundamental distinction between the conception of the base-superstructure relation in Marx and Gramsci as follows:

'Gramsci adds to the principal antithesis between structure and superstructure a secondary one, which develops within the sphere of the superstructure between the moment of civil society and the moment of the state. Of these two terms, the first is always the positive moment and the second is always the negative one' (Bobbio, 1979: 35).

Therefore Bobbio's interpretation of Gramsci suggests that Gramsci not only viewed the superstructural sphere as primary with respect to the economic base, but also subordinated his concept of civil society to the political state. These are clearly far-reaching claims and ones which have been severely criticised.

As Jacques Texier and others have argued, Bobbio's premises are problematic, and based on an inadequate understanding of Gramsci's dialectics. In an essay titled 'Gramsci, theoretician of the superstructures' Texier responds more or less directly to the two questions or issues Bobbio raises, which I have recounted above. Texier begins by stating that Bobbio's failure to acknowledge the dialectical unity represented in Gramsci's concept of the historical bloc, which underlies Gramsci's premiss of the 'unity of economy and culture and culture and politics' (Texier, 1979: 49), can be traced back to a failure to heed Gramsci's own distinction between real or 'organic' as against methodological distinctions (see Gramsci, 1986: 159-160). This failure results in

'two erroneous conceptions, namely "economism" and "ideologism": in the one case the mechanical causes are overestimated and in the other the voluntarist and in-

dividual element is given excessive importance' (Texier, 1979: 50).

Texier quite appropriately emphasises the importance of historical dialectics for understanding such Gramscian concepts as the integral state and the historical bloc as an expression of society's structure-superstructure relation. Introducing his critique of Bobbio, Texier poses three principles for a proper interpretation of Gramsci's conception of society. These are firstly the dialectical unity of the structure and the superstructure in Gramsci's concept of the historical bloc (Texier, 1979: 50). The second principle relates to the different aspects or moments of the superstructure, i.e. of political society and civil society or the economico-political and ethico-political moments, which Gramsci integrates in his dialectical concept of the integral state. Texier's third principle involves recalling that for Gramsci the unity of the structure and the superstructural levels can only be a process

'in which the sole agent is human activity in its various forms. This process is historical dialectics considered as a whole... This conception of historical dialectics throws a new light on the thesis of the unity of infrastructure and superstructure which destroys all epiphenomenalist reduction and all voluntarist inflation of ideology' (emphasis added) (Texier, 1979: 52).

Texier thus rejects Bobbio's use of the terms 'active' and 'positive' to describe Marx's concept of the base. He also rejects Bobbio's characterisation of Gramsci's supposed inversion of this notion in Marx as 'a theoretical condition of the active character of the superstructures' (Texier, 1979: 54). Such an assertion, Texier argues, 'supposes a mechanistic interpretation of Marx himself... Knowledge of Marxism has progressed' (my emphasis) (Texier, 1979: 54). In other words Texier rejects the notion of an opposition between an 'active' and 'positive' structure or superstructure, a notion which is only tenable if one strips the dialectic from Marx's materialist conception of history and consequently if one assumes that

'the concept of "reflection" and ideological "justification" of what is, represents the sole content that Marx and the marxist tradition would ascribe to the notion of superstructure' (Texier, 1979: 54-55).

Texier is here arguing that Marx's concept of the primacy of the base should not be described in mechanistic terms. He does not substantiate this claim beyond the general and rather unsatisfactory comment that modern Marxist studies have progressed, particularly in the area of dialectics, as if to suggest that this contentious issue has been satisfactorily resolved in the minds of contemporary commentators on Marx. This, as we saw in Chapter 2, is far from being the case. At any rate this problematic aspect of Texier's argument does not invalidate his subsequent arguments which, we believe, are relatively uncontroversial. Thus Texier does not dispute Bobbio's account of the relation, between Marx's and Gramsci's concepts of civil society, and Bobbio's claim that Gramsci's concept of civil society (which did not, as in Marx, mean the complex of relations of production and exchange) unlike in Marx, was situated in the superstructure. Rather, he points to Bobbio's confusion of terminological 'form' and 'content', i.e. of a focus on matters of terminological formality as opposed to substantive analysis:

'it is theses which are at stake here and not divergences in terminology' (Texier, 1979: 54).

Thus Texier reminds us that Marx only sometimes (in his earlier works) used the term 'civil society' to designate the economic base of society. For Bobbio to argue on the one hand that Marx and Gramsci defined civil society differently, whilst at the same time assuming that Gramsci retained Marx's thesis of the primacy of civil society for the sake of the term, ascribes little more to Gramsci's comprehension of Marx than a formal adherence to terminological propriety. This error is then, in Texier's view, compounded by Bobbio when he asserts that the primacy of civil society relocated to the superstructure implies a double inversion 'with respect to the usual reading of Marx and Engels' (Texier, 1979: 53). This double inversion consisted, according to

Bobbio's reading of Gramsci, in the moment of civil society standing in a primary and subordinating relation within the complex of the superstructures and the superstructure in a primary and subordinating relation with respect to the base:

'In Gramsci it is not even the complex of the superstructures, but, within the latter -- "the whole of ideologico-cultural relations", "the whole of spiritual and intellectual life...", which is the "primary", "conditioning", "active" moment and thus the "real home" of all history' (Texier, 1979: 55).

According to Texier what is lost in Bobbio's account is thus Bobbio's own observation that Marx and Gramsci defined civil society differently. In other words Bobbio assumes the primacy of civil society in both Marx and Gramsci without considering the implications of Gramsci's explicit redefinition of civil society, of Gramsci's shift in terminological content, for Marxism. For if Gramsci did not define civil society as the complex of relations of production and exchange as did Marx, is it not possible that Gramsci utilized a term for descriptive purposes which had nothing to do with any supposed repudiation of the fundamental thesis of historical materialism, namely that the economic base (or whatever one chooses to call it), constituted the social relations of production, and is the basis of the historical movement? According to Texier, therefore, what emerges from Bobbio's account is a reduction of Marx to economism and mechanicism which is precisely Croce's interpretation of Marxism, an interpretation Gramsci refuted in some great detail as was argued above (Texier, 1979: 55; see Morera, 1990: 134-135). In short

'Texier affirms that a determining relation exists between two parallel kinds of phenomena, structural and superstructural ones, which undergo a process of change and in which the structural ones, understood as the social relations of production, are primary or dominant' (Morera, 1990: 135).

Morera describes a third position regarding the relationship of the structure and the superstructure in Gramsci, that taken by

Portelli in his book Gramsci et le Bloc Historique. Morera tells us that Portelli argues that whilst the structure-superstructure relation is indeed the essential aspect in Gramsci's concept of the historical bloc,

'Gramsci never conceived this study in the form of the primacy of one element of the bloc over the other... [what is essential in] the relations structure/superstructure is the link that realizes their unity' (Portelli in Morera,1990: 135).

This would certainly accord with Gramsci's view of the organicity of society, outlined above. Morera argues further that Portelli (and Texier) appropriately emphasise the nature of the structure-superstructure relation as a process. This implies that the reflection between structure and superstructure is not an immediate one. Rather it 'develops' and consequently has a temporal aspect 'so that the structure represents the past, while the superstructure signifies the future' (Morera,1990: 136). However, in Morera's view Portelli does not provide an adequate account of the

'dialectic of the integration and disintegration of historical blocs. It is precisely this dialectic that helps us understand the process of unity which explains the structure as well as causal relations between structures and superstructures' (Morera,1990: 136).

As Sassoon argues, it was

'Gramsci's view that the precise delineation of the connections between changes in production and the organization of society was determined through a struggle between rival hegemonies rather than predetermined by any simple causal relationships that leads him to substitute the notion of 'historical bloc' for the metaphor "base and superstructure"' (Sassoon,1980: 85).

The debate regarding the proper conception of the structure-superstructure relation in Gramsci continues, and is likely to remain one of the most vexing yet challenging aspects of

Gramsci's theory. However for the purposes of this study, and particularly for a discussion of Gramsci's politics in the following section, Morera's dual interpretation of the historical bloc is adopted. In its one sense the historical bloc is viewed by Morera as a temporal process of becoming, particularly with reference to the analysis of the development of the relation of political forces

'from the level of the structural determination of classes to the development of a new state' (Morera,1990: 139).

In addition, for Morera the historical bloc also involves the dialectical relation of structure and superstructures at any given point in time

'within a given set of structural and superstructural conditions' (Morera,1990: 139).

As Morera argues, the historical bloc can only be understood properly and fully if both of these dimensions are taken into account,

'for we need to know both the relation that exists between any elements at any given point in time as well as their process of transformation during a historical period... Although Gramsci is primarily concerned with the function of political intervention in social change he does not reject the thesis of the primacy of the structure in the last instance' (Morera,1990: 139).

This latter point brings us full circle to the question of Gramsci's concept of politics and its relation to his concept of society, which will be discussed in the following section.

4.2 Gramsci's Concept Of Politics

In section 3.1. it was argued that Gramsci identified and distinguished social classes according to the degree of development of their collective political consciousness. In other words, Gramsci proposed a definition of class based on the capacity of a social group for establishing an alternative hegemony in society. And he argued that the level of political consciousness as well as the capacity for establishing an alternative hegemony varies greatly

from class to class. This diversity of levels or modes of political consciousness amongst social forces in society underlies Gramsci's concept of organicism. To cite Sassoon's summary of Gramsci's notion of organic crisis,

'there is a dialectical if uneven relationship between organic contradictions in the base, and the playing out of the political and ideological struggle in the superstructure... An organic crisis is a "given" from the point of view of a single moment of the class struggle but at the same time it is a "product" of the long-term class struggle. For Gramsci the organic crisis refers both to the whole historical period... and to the determinant moment. This latter is on the terrain of the political' (emphases added) (Sassoon, 1987: 183).

Gramsci's concept of 'organic crisis' thus has at least two important characteristics relevant both to his rejection of economism as well as to his development of an original concept of politics. Whilst organic crises originate in the long-term process of class struggle, it is at any one point in time (i.e. at the 'determinant moment') expressed by the political activity of the superstructural sphere. This is a crucial point, suggesting that Gramsci had a dual concept of politics, i.e. politics in a narrow sense including 'minor', 'immediate', 'tactical' political activity (i.e. a narrow concept of politics), but at the same time also a conception of politics as

'deeply imbedded in all aspects of collective revolutionary struggle, beyond the actual contestation for state power itself; as part of the "ensemble of relations", it was neither an epiphenomenon nor an all-powerful prime mover' (Boggs, 1980: 116; see Sassoon, 1987: 184; Gramsci, 1986: 178).

To put it another way, Gramsci's concept of politics contains the dialectical distinction, in Morera's words,

'between the long-term class conditions of historical development, on the one hand, and the various relations of forces at any given time, on the other, [which] is translated in political action as the distinction between

strategic goals and conjunctural or tactical political intervention as it is possible at any given time' (Morera,1990: 157).

But how is one to understand this duality of politics and of political activity in Gramsci's theory? Did he merely superimpose or graft a narrow concept of the 'interventionist political moment' onto the classical Marxist conception of politics as the process of class struggle? Or did he, as has been suggested above, establish a unique dialectical relation between two essentially distinct concepts of politics? And if the latter, how did he develop this view in his theory? To understand this we must examine Gramsci's scattered notes on politics, beginning with his extended references to Machiavelli's political writings.

4.2.1 Machiavelli And 'The Modern Prince'

Gramsci's complex understanding of politics, of political activity and political science, quite evidently was grounded in his writings on Machiavelli, and in Gramsci's view of the latter's relation to Marx. Gramsci characterised Machiavelli's masterpiece of political writing, The Prince, as follows:

'It is not a systematic treatment, but a "live" work, in which political ideology and political science are fused in the dramatic form of a "myth". Before Machiavelli, political science had taken the form either of the Utopia or of the scholarly treatise... [Machiavelli represented] the process whereby a given collective will, directed towards a given political objective, is formed... in terms of the qualities, characteristics, duties and requirements of a concrete individual' Gramsci,1986: 125, see 172).

This 'concrete individual' was Machiavelli's vision of a mythological 'Prince'. It was concrete, therefore, in the sense of 'a creation of concrete fantasy' which becomes actual in the minds of those to whom the myth becomes consciousness, in the figure of the Prince who

'acts on a dispersed and shattered people to arouse and organise its collective will. The utopian character of The

Prince lies in the fact that the Prince had no real historical existence; he did not present himself immediately and objectively to the Italian people, but was a pure theoretical abstraction -- a symbol of the leader and ideal condottiere. However, in a dramatic movement of great effect, the elements of passion and of myth which occur throughout the book are drawn together and brought to life in the conclusion, in the invocation of a prince who "really exists"... [in which] Machiavelli merges with the people... whom he... has convinced by the preceding argument -- the people whose consciousness and whose expression he becomes and feels himself to be, with whom he feels identified' (Gramsci, 1986: 126).

In Gramsci's view Machiavelli's notion of a 'prince' as a symbolic leader was his expression of a perceived need to underscore the principle of the unity of political action:

'It seems clear that Machiavelli wished to persuade [the progressive revolutionary] forces of the necessity of having a leader who knew what he wanted and how to obtain it, and of accepting him with enthusiasm even if his actions might conflict or appear to conflict with the generalised ideology of the time -- religion' (Gramsci, 1986: 136).

In these two quotes we see how Gramsci interpreted The Prince as a work outlining a radical theory of political action. In this work Machiavelli, in his time, provided 'a kind of "political manifesto"' (Gramsci, 1986: 127, see 172) with general guidelines and principles (the need to organise a collective will and to direct this will to accepting certain 'unpopular' acts which might be necessary to achieve a certain goal) for real historical acts of social transformation by the historically progressive force (i.e. the revolutionary class of the era):

'Machiavelli's ideas were not, in his own day, purely "bookish"... [and his] style is not that of a systematic compiler of treatises... quite the contrary; it is the style of a man of action, of a man urging action, the style of a

party manifesto' (Gramsci, 1986: 134).

The question of the political party, as the modern equivalent of the mythic Prince, was for Gramsci an important point of intersection in his conception of the relation between Machiavelli and Marx:

'This theme can be developed in a two-fold study: a study of the real relations between the two as theorists of militant politics, of action; and a book which would derive from Marxist doctrines an articulated system of contemporary politics of the Prince type. The theme would be the political party, in its relations with the classes and the State: not the party as a sociological category, but the party which seeks to found the State' (Gramsci, 1986: 123).

This extract is immensely suggestive of important Gramscian themes, touching as it does on the organic link between social class relations, the organisational and connective function of the political party, and the latter's endeavours to found a 'new' state (see also Gramsci, 1986: 267-268, 269-270). And above all it alludes to Gramsci's dualistic concept of politics, on the one hand linked to the notion of class and on the other to the super-structural sphere of the political state (see section 4.2.2).

It would appear that the general importance of Machiavelli for Gramsci's account of politics is the manner in which he saw Machiavelli as comprehending the need, especially in revolutionary periods, to establish a unifying political focus for militant political action. For Machiavelli this was the 'mythological prince'. For Gramsci, on the other hand, it was the 'modern prince', the political party:

'The modern prince, the myth-prince, cannot be a real person, a concrete individual. It can only be an organism, a complex element of society in which a collective will, which has already been recognised and has to some extent asserted itself in action, begins to take concrete form. History has already provided this organism, and it is the political party -- the first cell in which there come together germs

of collective will tending to become universal and total' (Gramsci, 1986: 129, see 147).

The revolutionary party accordingly has a 'long-term and organic character', capable of cultivating or promoting an intellectual, moral and cultural reform and of generating a coherent national-popular collective will (hegemonic project) directed at the 'founding of new States or new national and social structures' (Gramsci, 1986: 129). The political party, in Gramsci's own words, 'must be and cannot but be the proclaimer and organiser of an intellectual and moral reform, which also means creating the terrain for a subsequent development of the national-popular collective will towards the realisation of a superior, total form of modern civilisation' (Gramsci, 1986: 132-133).

However, cultural (intellectual and moral) reform must in each situation be coupled to a programme of economic reform in order to bring about a strengthening of the position of the subordinate classes in the social and economic fields;

'indeed the programme of economic reform is precisely the concrete form in which every intellectual and moral reform presents itself' (Gramsci, 1986: 133, see 263-264).

Note Gramsci's emphasis on the organicity necessary to fundamental socio-economic reform, and on the function of the revolutionary party, in the process of political transformation. This, according to Gramsci, is the great value of Marxism for a modern concept of politics:

'The basic innovation introduced by the philosophy of praxis into the science of politics and of history is the demonstration that... human nature is the totality of historically determined social relations' (Gramsci, 1986: 133).

But how is this related to Gramsci's view of the conjunctural or immediate forces which are actually engaged in the act of revolution, i.e. to the third 'moment' or 'level' of relation of political forces as well as the relation of military forces? This concerns the determinant moment in conjunctural or tactical political intervention possible under given structural

conditions. This question is directly related to Gramsci's dual concept of politics, that of the dialectic of coercion and consent, or force and hegemony in political activity, which together with the question of the sense in which Gramsci's original concept of politics can be described as one of 'relative autonomy', will be examined in the following section.

4.2.2 Gramsci's Dual Concept Of Politics

In a passage of great significance for Gramsci's concept of politics he utilized Machiavelli's metaphor of the 'Centaur' to describe the dual nature of political action:

'Another point which needs to be defined and developed is the "dual perspective" in political action and in national life. The dual perspective can present itself on various levels... but these can all theoretically be reduced to two fundamental levels, corresponding to the dual nature of Machiavelli's Centaur -- half-animal and half-human. They are the levels of force and of consent, authority and hegemony, violence and civilisation, and of the individual moment and of the universal moment ("Church" and "State"), of agitation and of propaganda, of tactics and strategy, etc (Gramsci, 1986: 169-170).

As Laclau and Mouffe as well as Morera point out, Gramsci was not the first political thinker to take the dichotomy of coercion and consent as the basis for the analysis of politics (Laclau and Mouffe, 1989: 7-8; Morera, 1990: 164-165). We have already seen in the above section that Machiavelli made the (political) distinction between an organised collective will (roughly paralleling Gramsci's concept of hegemony as consensual politics) and the need at times for a political leader ('prince') to take actions which might be unpopular but are necessary to a given end (coercive politics). However as Morera and Buci-Glucksmann argue, for Gramsci consensual politics is more complex than the activity of creating popular acceptance of an existing set of social and political relations (Morera, 1990: 165; Buci-Glucksmann, 1982: 118). In Gramsci's theory of hegemony the meaning of consensus

'must be found not in the apparent willingness of an individual to engage in certain activities, but rather in the conditions for that willingness to be present. For... hegemony is not the result of the sum of individual acts of consent, but rather, the organization of a collective will... Hegemony, then, is not spontaneous, but "organized consensus" (emphases added) (Morera, 1990: 165, 166).

In other words the success of an emergent class's hegemonic project (i.e. creation and maintenance of its hegemony) presupposes an adequate organisational basis for the creation of a spontaneous universal consensus involving both class and non-class forces, i.e. a national-popular collective will. The creation of a collective will therefore involves both 'conjunctural' (immediate) as well as 'organic' (underlying) forces. The former is linked to non-class forces which arise on the conjunctural terrain of political activity and are therefore underdetermined by historical laws. The organic forces, which Morera refers to as the structural basis of consent (Morera, 1990: 165), are linked to the long-term development of the economic structure, and hence also to the historical process of class formation.

The achievement of a hegemonic project is contingent upon two further aspects, both of which have been suggested above. Firstly, the hegemonic project depends for its success on the ability of the emergent class or group to forge a higher moral and intellectual (i.e. cultural) order which attracts potential allies. Secondly, the creation of a social group's or class's hegemony is conditional upon its capacity to show those social groups whose consent it requires that it is both able and willing to solve the problems facing that particular society. To bring this about the emergent hegemonic group must be able to pose solutions to society's problems in a progressive way. As we saw in section 3.1, these problems are not only those generated by conflictual class relations. This, Gramsci argued, is particularly true of modern industrial societies in which civil society is well developed and complex and in which social move-

ments and groups operate without necessarily having a class basis. Indeed it was Gramsci's concept of civil society, as characterised also by non-class relations and interests, which distinguished his concept of the superstructural sphere from that of Marx. And it was argued that Gramsci's view of the absence of a determinate class identity in such movements or groups posed serious problems for the classical Marxist class analysis of politics.

Simon argues that for Gramsci the private organisations or associations constituting civil society have a variety of distinct purposes. What they have in common, however, is that they all

'embody social practices which are associated with the assumptions and values which people accept, often unconsciously... A ruling class establishes its hegemony by combining these values and assumptions with its own class interests and thus building a social base within civil society for the coercive and administrative power of the state' (emphasis added) (Simon, 1985: 89).

As Gramsci argued, in civil society one or more of the multiplicity of private associations establishes its relative or absolute domination. This constitutes the 'hegemonic apparatus' of the dominant social group: 'the basis for the State in the narrow sense of the governmental-coercive apparatus' (Gramsci, 1986: 264-265, see 181-182). It is for this reason that, as Sassoon argues, the human or subjective political element is 'the most crucial because it forms the terrain upon which ultimately the element of force depends' (Sassoon, 1987: 187; Femia, 1987: 117; Gramsci, 1986: 401). Gramsci's notion of necessary political intervention points towards his view of the dialectical relationship between (unevenly) developing structural and political forces; a relationship which Gramsci conceived in terms of his concept of the historical bloc.

The function of hegemony in society is thus two-fold. Firstly it is directed towards justifying and developing a spontaneous ac-

ceptance of existing structural conditions (i.e. socio-economic relations) which cannot be changed without transforming society in its totality. Herein lies the crucial organisational and connective function of the political party and the intellectuals which bring about their confluence of conditions. Secondly hegemony is directed towards accomodating those movements, classes or groups with which the dominant group in society seeks to establish an alliance in order to control conflicts arising out of the ever proliferating variety of institutions, associations and movements in the private spheres of civil society (hence Gramsci's concept of the integral state incorporating both the functions of domination as well as hegemony). This, as Gramsci said, involves concessions and compromises, but these concessions and compromises are limited or circumscribed by the prevailing structural conditions or class-structure (see Gramsci, 1986: 168). Under these circumstances hegemony plays a decisive role as the means for preserving the supremacy of the dominant class. Hegemony 'serves the function of unifying civil society so that it remains adequate for the existing socio-economic structure' (Morera, 1990: 173; see Laclau and Mouffe, 1989: 7-8)). In this sense the social relationships of civil society constitute

'relations of power just as much (though in a different way) as are the coercive relations of the state. A hegemonic class exercises power over subordinate classes in civil society in addition to the state power which it exercises through its predominance in the state' (Simon, 1985: 72; see Bocock, 1986: 28).

By implication, therefore, any subordinate class wishing to challenge the power of a dominant class must successfully challenge that class's hegemony. And since this can only be done by means of political activity Gramsci's concept of politics is extended

'to cover any activities which are intended to change the nature of the spontaneous consent which has been built up in civil society [i.e. hegemony]... to cover the activity of changing human relationships (and the ideas implicit in

them) in all spheres of life' (Simon,1985: 89, 90).

Hegemony is not spontaneous but organised consensus. However hegemony is also not force, 'it is not imposed: it is conquered through a specific and intellectual and moral dimension' (Buci-Glucksmann,1982: 120).

The Marxist-Leninist concept of politics as the contestation of state power generated by conflicting classes is thus radically extended by Gramsci. Morera describes this extended dual concept of politics as a distinction between

'(a) a classical Marxist view, in which the state is an instrument of the dominant class; and (b) an Aristotelian view of politics as the science of the good life... This double conception of politics renders the expression "primacy of politics" somewhat ambiguous; for it may indeed be primary in the Aristotelian version, but not primary in the Marxist sense' (Morera,1990: 161; see also Simon,1985: 91; Sassoon,1987: 184).

Echoing Aristotle, Gramsci described man as a 'political being', since in as much as men are active, i.e. living, they contribute towards the modification (or preservation) of their social environment (Gramsci,1986: 265). Mankind does not passively receive the conditions of its existence but actively, if not always altogether consciously, reproduces and transforms these conditions. In this view, therefore, man changes himself to the extent that he modifies the 'complex relations of which he is the hub' (Gramsci,1986: 352). It is in this sense that Gramsci equated the 'real philosopher' with the politician, i.e.

'the active man who modifies the environment, understanding by environment the ensemble of relations which each of us enters to take part in. If one's own individuality is the ensemble of these relations, to create one's personality means to acquire consciousness of them and to modify one's own personality means to modify the ensemble of these relations' (Gramsci,1986: 352).

However, it is apparent from the above discussion that consensual politics is but one aspect of Gramsci's dual concept of politics, the other being the coercive function of the state in its narrow historical sense, which Gramsci termed political society. In the above discussion we have emphasised that for Gramsci the range of political activity is limited by society's class-structure which is a 'given':

'Hence, politics is linked to coercion, to power understood as the supremacy of one class over the other, or of one group over another' (Morera, 1990: 174).

This is the sense in which for Gramsci politics is limited by structural conditions and relations,

'real historical processes which give rise to possibilities within power structures or class structures which, in the long run, set the limits of any conscious intervention designed to change society' (Morera, 1990: 175).

But this is only one sense or dimension of politics; there is also the other dimension of effective political interests. Politics, on the one hand, is limited by the dialectical long-term causal determination of the structural sphere, but on the other hand Gramsci recognises the efficacy of subjective political forces on this terrain of socio-economic transformation. Gramsci himself provides the most succinct expression of the dialectical relationship between politics and economics:

'Politics becomes permanent action and gives birth to permanent organisations precisely in so far as it identifies itself with economics. But it is also distinct from it, which is why one may speak separately of economics and politics, and speak of "political passion" as of an immediate impulse to action which is born on the "permanent and organic" terrain of economic life but which transcends it, bringing into play emotions and aspirations in whose incandescent atmosphere even calculations involving the individual human life itself obey different laws from those of individual profit, etc' (Gramsci, 1986: 139-140).

And furthermore that at

'certain moments, the automatic thrust due to the economic factor is slowed down, obstructed or even momentarily broken by traditional ideological elements -- hence... there must be a conscious, planned struggle to ensure that the exigencies of the economic position of the masses, which may conflict with the traditional leadership's policies, are understood' (Gramsci, 1986: 168).

And in order to 'liberate the economic thrust from the dead weight of traditional policies' (Gramsci, 1986: 168), there is a need for an appropriate initiative in the political sphere. This initiative is instrumental in changing the political direction of the forces which must be 'absorbed if a new, homogeneous politico-economic historical bloc, without internal contradictions, is to be successfully formed' (Gramsci, 1986: 168).

This is the sense in which Gramsci interpreted Machiavelli's notion of political action, the 'assertion implicit in his writings that politics is an autonomous activity, with its own principles and laws' (Gramsci, 1986: 134). Thus although it is correct to say that Gramsci emphasised 'unity', both in terms of revolutionary action under the leadership of a revolutionary party in addition to a unified theoretical focus of the processes characterising the socio-economic and political transformation of society, as a precondition of effective political revolution, his concept of politics cannot be reduced to one or the other of its dialectically related constituent parts. It therefore makes no sense to impose an extraneous categorisation on Gramsci's theory of politics which can only be arrived at on the basis of a narrow or partial interpretation of his texts. Partisan interpretations of Gramsci's considerable contribution to Marxism, and to political theory more generally, is not a re-assertion of 'Leninism' or an insipient 'post-Marxism'. A selective or symptomatic reading of Gramsci offers rich pickings for lenient interpreters and 'true-believers'. Yet such attempts to impoverish Gramsci's legacy must be resisted since it is these tendencies which have

so often imposed artificial constraints on his contribution to Marxism. Gramsci's was an original attempt to rescue historical materialism from its growing vulgarisation in the hands of political opportunists.

In our concluding chapter we will discuss the main implications of Gramsci's theory of politics for his notion of democracy.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this concluding chapter is to analyse Gramsci's pluralist concept of politics as a contribution to the possible renewal of a democratic perspective in the Marxist tradition which, as Laclau and Mouffe argue, has failed to create 'organic forms of unity' between itself and democratic practice (Laclau and Mouffe, 1989: 149).

In Chapter 1 we argued that the development of Western political theory has to a great extent proceeded against the background of the themes of political unitarianism and pluralism which were already clearly articulated in the works of Plato and Aristotle. Our discussion in Chapter 1 contrasted Plato's unitary concepts of the state and politics with Aristotle's political pluralism, indicating the significance of their contrasting perspectives for their notions of democracy. Aristotle's early political pluralism was then compared to the classical concept of politics in modern liberal pluralism. As against this we showed in what way Plato's unitary concepts of the state and politics influenced the traditions of Hegelian and Marxist political thought, highlighting the distinct yet related Hegelian and Marxist critiques of liberal pluralism. We argued that both Hegel and Marx rejected the liberal notion of democracy, describing it as a mere formal commitment to a notion of bourgeois political rights as the basis for institutional and state forms which were devoid of real, socio-economic democratic content. In Chapter 1 we also highlighted Marx's rejection of Hegelian idealism, and described the young Marx's decisive break with the Young Hegelians, and especially with Feuerbach's radical humanism, in his transition to a more original and mature stage in his political thought.

Chapter 2 outlined the gradual emergence of Marx's distinctive concepts of the state and politics in terms of some of his key earlier works which culminated in The German Ideology, which con-

tained the first formulation of historical materialism. We concluded our description of historical materialism with a summary of its main implications for the concepts of the state and politics. It was argued that Marx rejected the liberal notion of politics, which in his view was based on class differences, as well as the liberal bourgeois concept of the state as a regulator of conflictual classes and divergent interests. Marx argued that the state is a classbound institution and that in capitalist society the state acts at the behest of the bourgeoisie, i.e. the dominant class in the sphere of production. For Marx the democratisation of society must involve the restoration of the direct producer's control over the means of production and the elimination of divisive class relations. This, he argued, was only possible if the bourgeois state is smashed, since it acts in the interests of the dominant class which would naturally oppose a radical process of socioeconomic and, hence, political democratisation. In the final part of Chapter 2 we provided a brief account of the development of historical materialism in the Marxist orthodoxy of the Second and Third Internationals. In the course of that discussion we emphasised the split between the German Social Democrats, such as Karl Kautsky and Georgi Plekhanov, and the 'radicals' Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky and Stalin. The strongly economistic and gradualist views prevalent in the German Social Democratic Party, which led to the split, were characterised by a tendency to regard the democratic parliamentary systems of Western Europe as a means by which to realise an incremental socialisation of society. The Social Democrats generally eschewed Marx's notion of the need to smash the state and, in stark contrast to Lenin, regarded existing democratic institutions as a viable arena for the pursuit of socialist goals. As against this we outlined Lenin's theory of the state and politics which in many respects constituted a development of Marx's own views. The course of the Russian Revolution and the consequences of Stalinism were contrasted with Trotsky's critique of what he regarded as a vulgarisation of revolutionary aims and a tyranny of means. His views are perhaps

best captured in the following passage:

'The party organisation substitutes itself for the party, the central committee substitutes itself for the organisation, and, finally, a "dictator" substitutes himself for the central committee' (Trotsky, 1986: 79).

Our discussion in Chapter 3 centred on Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and the integral state as distinguished from the instrumentalist concept of the state in Marxism-Leninism. It was argued that Gramsci's concept of hegemony had a dual meaning. On the one hand it referred to the phased development of the political consciousness of a social class or group, and on the other hand it was used by Gramsci to describe civil society as the arena of consensual politics, i.e. of hegemony building. On the other hand it was argued that Gramsci's concept of the integral state involved a significant broadening of Marx's concept of the state. For Gramsci the concept of the state included not only the governmental substructure of society, i.e. the narrow concept of the state which Gramsci referred to as political society, but also his concept of civil society, the sphere of hegemonic politics.

In Chapter 4, Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and the integral state were related to his radical critique of the economism of Marxist orthodoxy. It was argued that Gramsci's rejection of economism involved two elements. On the one hand he abandoned a narrowly instrumentalist concept of the state. And on the other Gramsci rejected the reductionist concept of politics dominant in Second and Third International Marxism. Instead, Gramsci posited a dualistic concept of politics. A key to this concept was Gramsci's recognition that popular democratic struggles do not necessarily have a class character, i.e. for Gramsci not all agents of political activity arose on the basis of society's production relations. And in Gramsci's view the formation of social groups without direct links to class-structure constituted

the terrain of political intervention. Furthermore, private institutions in the sphere of civil society may be formed independently from coercive state structures which are located in political society. Nevertheless, on this view the efficacy of conscious political intervention is, in the final instance, limited or circumscribed by existing class relations and power structures. Thus popular democratic forces, as against social classes, may function with a relatively high degree of autonomy but do not function independently of the effects of class rule. In the era of the mass proliferation of private institutions in civil society the state must, in Morera's words,

'change its relation to private institutions, for it can no longer dominate them and overcome conflicts in an easy way. The potential for conflict must be transformed into organized consensus; conflict must be contained within the limits of permissible opposition' (Morera, 1990: 163).

This reflects Gramsci's view that increased state intervention in the modern era cannot be based on coercion alone but in particular must involve an extension of the ruling class's hegemony. Furthermore, although opposition forces might function with a relative degree of autonomy, they cannot escape the effects which class rule have on their ability to intervene in a politically effective manner. Revolutionary strategy must therefore be based on a correct understanding of the potential of and the limitations on effective political intervention. In this sense Gramsci's concept of the state and politics is more adequate (than, for example, that found in Lenin) for a Marxist account of the complex social structure and political processes of advanced capitalist societies. The focus of Gramsci's analysis of politics may be likened to what Laclau and Mouffe describe as a 'new situation' in which the very identity of the forces engaged in political struggle is constantly shifting, necessitating a continuous revaluation of agents involved in the political process (Laclau and Mouffe, 1989: 151). As Sassoon argues, with reference to the novel relationship between the state and society in the advanced stages of capitalism,

'as the state intervenes in all aspects of peoples' lives, old notions of the division between economics and politics, between public and the private are open to discussion' (Sassoon,1980: 82).

Gramsci's major contribution lies in his particular conception of this new situation which, as we argued, is located in his extended critique of economism and the pluralistic perspective which this brought to Marxism. We are now in a position to investigate the question of the relation between Gramsci's integral concept of the state and his broadening of the reductionist orthodox Marxist concept of politics on the one hand, and his notion of democracy on the other.

Gramsci described the division between rulers and ruled as a 'primordial fact' of politics:

'The first element of politics is that there really do exist rulers and ruled, leaders and led. The entire science and art of politics are based on this primordial, and (given certain general conditions) irreducible fact' (Gramsci,1986: 144).

However Gramsci argued that these 'given' conditions are historical and therefore potentially transient:

'One premiss is fundamental: is it the intention that there should always be rulers and ruled, or is the objective to create the conditions in which this division is no longer necessary [i.e.] the belief that this division is only an historical fact, corresponding to certain conditions?' (Gramsci,1986: 144).

Adopting the latter view Gramsci accorded the revolutionary political party (and 'organic' intellectuals) the task of overcoming these historically determined conditions and to found a 'new type of state' (Gramsci,1986: 147). Sassoon rightly argues that in the context of modern societies in which social and organisational pluralism is highly developed, the expansive task which Gramsci accorded the party is unrealistic (Sassoon,1987: XV). Nevertheless, the central role which the political party

played in Gramsci's conception of revolutionary politics (whether it be the party of the hegemonic and dominant social group or that of its socialist opposition) should not be interpreted as an invocation of party tyranny. Gramsci's views both on Italy's Fascist Party as well as his critique of Stalin's Communist Party attest to this. Thus, for example, in a series of comments in the SPN Gramsci rejected the notion of a 'democratic' one-party state, i.e. the reduction of the state's organisation to the form of the party, thus implicitly re-affirming his political pluralism:

'In countries where there is a single, totalitarian, governing party... the functions of such a party are no longer directly political, but merely technical ones of propaganda and public order, and moral and cultural influence. The political function is indirect. For, even if no other legal parties exist, other parties in fact always do exist and other tendencies which cannot be legally coerced... in such [totalitarian] parties cultural functions predominate, which means that political language becomes jargon. In other words, political questions are disguised as cultural ones, and as such become insoluble' (Gramsci, 1986: 149).

This passage contains two important general points relating to Gramsci's pluralism. Firstly, Gramsci criticised all forms of dictatorial party rule. Commenting on this passage Sassoon says: 'A critique of fascism, yes, but also of Stalinism' (Sassoon, 1987: 231). Secondly, this passage indicates that for Gramsci the political (and cultural) life of societies with one-party dictatorships becomes merely mechanistic and formal, i.e. impoverished. In such societies the masses

'have no other political function than a generic loyalty, of a military kind, to a visible or invisible political centre... The mass following is simply for 'manoeuvre', and is kept happy by means of moralising sermons, emotional stimuli, and messianic myths of an awaited golden age, in which present contradictions and miseries will be automatically resolved and made well' (Gramsci, 1986: 150).

As against this Gramsci emphasised that the socialist transformation of a society depends for its success on the extent to which the political process of that society is democratised. In Gramsci, as Sassoon argues,

'the very activity of politics, of State activity in the widest sense is no longer separated from society but becomes an aspect of the lives of the whole population' (Sassoon, 1987: 223).

In other words for Gramsci politics and political activity in an integral socialist state was not limited to the traditional political sphere located in the governmental sub-structures of political society. Politics must be based on widespread consensus in the sphere of civil society. Conformism extracted by means of the coercive power of political society cannot be substituted for hegemony. However, for Gramsci politics

'defined as hegemonic activity cementing an historical bloc around the universalistic vocation of the dominant class degenerates into a version of the passive revolution in which the economic-corporative interests of sections of society... are articulated. In a very contradictory manner, the State and that party which claims moral, ethical leadership in the absence of a pluralism of political and cultural forces, remains on the terrain of coercion and economic-corporativism' (Sassoon, 1987: 224).

Thus although Gramsci argued that every political party is the expression of a particular social group (Gramsci, 1986: 148), he nevertheless regarded 'arbitration' or mediation as a key function of any political party seeking to establish a new (working class) state based not on coercion but rather on an alternative hegemony:

'certain parties represent a single social group precisely in so far as they exercise a balancing and arbitrating function between the interests of their group and those of other groups, and succeed in securing the development of the group which they represent with the consent and assistance of the

allied groups -- if not out and out with that of groups which are definitely hostile' (Gramsci, 1986: 148).

The central function of the party, therefore, is to formulate a coherent strategy, to act as a 'collective intellectual' by developing alternative conceptions to those existing in capitalist society, alternative conceptions which are directed towards social transformation brought about by the broad mass of the population under the hegemony of the working class. The new state form which emerges from this process thus reflects an historical bloc constituted of a diversity of forces not all of whom are concentrated in any single party or combination of parties (Sassoon, 1980: 87).

Gramsci emphasised that, in order to be 'progressive', working class parties must take on a democratic form. Thus despite the fact that parties have a policing function, i.e. 'the function of safeguarding a certain political and legal order', the nature of the party bears on the 'means and the procedures by which such a function is carried out' (Gramsci, 1986: 154-155). In assessing the nature of parties it must be established whether their purpose is one of progressive dissemination or of reactionary repression:

'It is progressive when it tends to keep the dispossessed reactionary forces within the bounds of legality, and to raise the backward masses to the level of the new legality. It is regressive when it tends to hold back the vital forces of history and to maintain a legality which has been superseded, which is anti-historical, which has become extrinsic' (Gramsci, 1986: 155).

Gramsci laid great store by the implications which the internal functioning of the party has for the greater society, and the new state form towards which it must work. He argued that parties are progressive when they function according to the principles of democratic centralism, and regressive when they are organised in terms of bureaucratic centralism. Gramsci characterised the second form of party as a 'simple, unthinking executor' which

amounts to a policing organism. Reference to it as a political party 'is simply a metaphor of a mythological character' (Gramsci, 1986: 155)

As suggested, Gramsci extended his description of the internal functioning of political parties to characterise the relationship between leaders and their mass following as the basis of political life, drawing a distinction between organic unity and mere uniformity. Conscious of the dangers which bureaucratisation pose for the vitality and coherence of the workers' movement and its party, Gramsci vehemently rejected bureaucratic centralism. He argued for democratic centralism:

"organicity can only be found in democratic centralism, which is so to speak a "centralism" in movement -- i.e. a continual adaptation of the organisation to the real movement... [which] does not solidify mechanically into bureaucracy' (Gramsci, 1986: 188-189).

In one of the SPN's most eloquent passages Gramsci's conception of democratic centralism is explicitly connected with the view that political action must be consciously directed towards 'true' social transformation:

'Democratic centralism... consists in the critical pursuit of what is identical in seeming diversity of form and on the other hand of what is distinct and even opposed in apparent uniformity, in order to organise and interconnect closely that which is similar... This continuous effort to separate out the "international" and "unitary" element in national and local reality is true concrete political action... It requires an organic unity between theory and practice, between intellectual strata and popular masses, between rulers and ruled... whereas... in the bureaucratic conception... there is no unity but a stagnant swamp, on the surface calm and "mute", and no federation but a "sack of potatoes", i.e. a mechanical juxtaposition of single "units" without any connection between them' (Gramsci, 1986: 190).

Laclau and Mouffe provide a characterisation of democracy based

on Gramsci's notion of organic unity. They argue that democracy faces two dangers. On the one hand there is the totalitarian 'attempt to pass beyond the constitutive character of antagonism and deny plurality in order to restore unity'. However there is also 'a symmetrically opposite danger of a lack of all reference to this unity' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1989: 188). Unity cannot be imposed. Rather, it involves identifying and articulating positions, values and interests which social subjects hold in common as the basis for constructing a dynamic unity:

'Between the logic of complete identity and that of pure difference, the experience of democracy should consist of the recognition and the multiplicity of social logics along with the necessity of their articulation. But this articulation should be constantly re-created and renegotiated, and there is no final point at which a balance will be definitively achieved' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1989: 188).

Gramsci's notion of organic unity is the basis for his view of the true end of social transformation, i.e. the 'withering away' of political society. And in Gramsci's view, the Marxist doctrine of the state conceived political society as 'tendentially capable of withering away', i.e. that it

'is possible to imagine the coercive element of the State withering away by degrees, as ever-more conspicuous elements of regulated society (or ethical State or civil society) make their appearance' (my emphasis) (Gramsci, 1986: 263).

Gramsci argued that it is only once political society has been subsumed into civil society that the 'coming of a regulated society', that is the formation of a communist society, could be complete (Gramsci, 1986: 382, see 257f).

The crisis in Marxist political theory today has been brought about by its failure to make the transition into a sustainable form of political practice in what used to be called 'real existing socialism'. This has been vividly demonstrated by the col-

lapse of Soviet Communism, which for most of our century has been the focal point and measure of this practice. The reasons for communism's disintegration may symptomatically be traced to this or that decision, some development or other, etc.. Thus one may rest with the observation that communism's Post-War political development has shown that Stalinism's underlying despotic principle was never truly expunged from the political ethic of the Soviet Union and its extensive, global sphere of influence. The most sustained and systematic critique of Stalinism in the Post-War period took place amongst a core group of Marxist intellectuals and political movements in Western Europe. Though there were repeated attempts in Eastern European countries such as Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, to initiate a democratisation of their ossified communist systems, these projects failed. Coercive Soviet intervention certainly played a large role in this failure. However, besides the highly visible failure of Soviet style politics, the far more important general failure in Marxism remains its seeming inability to evolve democratic forms of political practice.

Communism's teleology for too long paraded, by doctrinal implication, as the reason for coerced 'unity' in the face of bourgeois 'reaction', or whatever happened at the time to be the favoured slogan for liberal democracy. In other words, a precariously balanced holding action was maintained between the need and pressure to democratise communist societies and the lingering sense that the West would self-destruct, given time. Consequently the Soviet Union and its allies never abandoned the erroneous assumption that Western states were incapable of instituting radical incremental reforms to effectively address the particular social, economic and political problems which they have faced since World War II. Furthermore, the ruling Soviet elite never quite abandoned the reductionist Stalinist view that Western Social Democratic parties were by definition unwitting tools of bourgeois hegemony. In this regard the German Social Democratic Party's alignment with imperial militarism in 1914

must surely have contributed towards the institutionalisation of Stalin's professed abhorrence of Social Democracy. However, Stalin's reductionist analysis of Inter-War Western European history and politics, coupled to his genocidal practices, had the long term consequence of precluding the possibility of significant gains for Post-War Soviet communist ideology in Western Europe. A belated recognition of this surfaced with Mikhael Gorbachev's rise to power. Still, his November 1989 decision to allow the dismantling of the Berlin Wall amounted to the end of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe as well as the Post-War world order.

Marxism today cannot avoid the challenging task of 'rethinking Marx's thought' if the entire tradition is not to recede into obscurity or retreat into oblivion. Such a reassessment of Marxism will have to take into account certain identifiable global trends which have begun to emerge in the aftermath of the Cold War. The international political scene is characterised by acute volatility. This is perhaps an unavoidable aspect of fundamental shifts and ruptures in the socio-economic and political spheres of the lives of billions of people. Particularly in Europe, although certainly not only there, there is in every dimension of life growing disaffection with past practices and norms. Amongst Western Europeans there is a general abhorrence of Marxism as well as a growing tendency to question the efficacy of liberal democracy in conditions of increasing intolerance and economic malaise. In Eastern Europe social and political life is consumed by parochial national and ethnic concerns. This in particular is a development which threatens the stability not only of Europe but of the entire world community. Ominously, in many European regions fascism and national socialism are re-emerging and enjoy ever growing support at grass-roots level. Concomittantly, a recent poll revealed the somewhat startling fact that as opposed to 29% in 1989, today 45% of Russians regard Stalin as a 'great leader'. These trends are not good reasons for a reversion to either Hitlerism or Stalinism. Yet they reveal elementary forces

which are operating in European society. And these may be linked to the widespread failure of European leaders and political parties to understand and hence address even the most basic concerns of the broader population. Political decisions are to an ever increasing extent being taken on the basis of a dangerous conflation of transient sentiment and reaction on the one hand, and conviction and prudence on the other. In other words a profound disjuncture is emerging between leaders and led. The future success (and survival) of political movements, globally, depends on their capacity to demonstrate, in concrete ways, their ability to meet the crisis of confidence head on and to reassert positive leadership in accordance with a coherent and workable vision. It is in this transitional environment that motives for Gramsci's fundamental concern with the organic link between political parties, intellectuals and mass followings become once again the deciding factor in political life. Given the degeneration of historical hegemonies and the widespread disenchantment with past and existing democratic practices, Gramsci provides us with a way to think a new Weltanschauung and to begin working towards its realisation. Dogmatism and nostalgia have no place in this crucial process.

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